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Competence for Citizenship:
Deaf People's (Re)creation of Polities and Claim-Making Possibilities in Northern Uganda

Thesis

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Gitte Beckmann

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Prof. Dr. Mareile Flitsch and Prof. Dr. Susan Reynolds Whyte

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Contents

Illustrations and Tables

Abstract

This thesis, entitled "Competence for Citizenship: Deaf People's (Re)creation of Polities and Claim-Making Possibilities in Northern Uganda," joins a vibrant conversation in anthropological deaf studies about the perspectives, experiences, and opportunities of deaf people in countries of the Global South. Focusing on the transitions of deaf people's possibilities to make meaningful claims within different polities, it provides unique insights into how deaf people (re)create competences for citizenship in Uganda. The thesis is based on a qualitative study among deaf people in the sub-region Acholi in Northern Uganda in a post-war context, concentrating on times of tremendous international and national political transition from the 1970s to 2016. Between 1986 and 2006, the region experienced a civil war between the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) and government forces, leading to the creation of encampments, greatly dependent on humanitarian aid, housing over 90% of the Acholi population. In 1996, the Ugandan government forced people to move into Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps, with the justification that they protected the population from the LRA. 1996 was also the year that the Ugandan disability movement reached Acholiland for the first time through programs and projects. This thesis argues that the spatial situation of encampment, together with the introduction of institutions of and for deaf people, led to an unexpected shift in deaf people's possibilities to make meaningful claims and thus (re)create competence for citizenship. Central to this transition were the introduction and spread of Ugandan Sign Language: newly established sign-language-related networks became of major importance to extend and transform social relationships with both deaf and hearing family members, neighbors, peers, colleagues, or fellow worshippers. These networks also (re)created new qualities of relationships constituting these different polities. The theoretical perspective is based on the trifecta of Ingold's (2011) dwelling perspective, Honneth's (1995) recognition approach, and Isin's (2009) concept of acts of citizenship. By highlighting the significance of different qualitative social and institutional relationships within the diverse polities deaf people became part of, this thesis calls for a critical debate about multidimensional approaches to enhance the lives of people with disabilities in addition to the still-dominant rights-based approach for people with disabilities, including deaf people.

Preface

I travelled to Uganda in the context of my dissertation for the first time in 2009. Especially within the first few years, I was strongly influenced by those scholars who incorporated the idea and ideal of Deaf culture into their area of research. This concept offered a perspective and a new, unknown way for me to conceptualize and understand deaf people's identities and lives. Various approaches (Deaf culture, but also Deafhood or DEAF-WORLDS) foremost claimed that differences between deaf and hearing people were not due to physical deafness, but due instead to perceptual and cultural differences. Many of these works were developed by deaf people who regarded themselves as Deaf – as culturally different – in the first place, and all of the studies were written by activists and scholars coming from, living in, and/or writing about deaf people in countries of the Global North, especially the United States. Their claims to understand deaf people as cultural minorities were based in their own experiences and the historical and political backgrounds of their own countries.

As a hearing anthropologist, the concept of Deaf culture provided a new way for me to think about and study deaf people. At the same time, it raised questions of marginalization and power differences – not only between me, as a researcher and hearing person from a country of the Global North, and deaf people in the sub-region of Acholi in Northern Uganda, but between the approaches developed in the Global North and the experiences and perspectives of deaf people in Uganda. How did deaf people in Uganda describe and experience their lives? And to what extent could concepts like Deaf culture help in understanding their experiences?

I regard myself as part of the second generation of anthropologists focusing on deaf people in their work. This second generation does not deny the important concepts of Deaf culture, but also takes into consideration the life experiences of deaf people as part of other polities such as kin, community, or the state in countries of the Global South.

From my first encounters with my interlocutors in 2009 until the end of the writing phase at the end of 2017, I moved two times: from Switzerland to Uganda in 2012 and then to New York at the beginning of 2017. These different environments were of importance for this book: coming to Uganda with a focus on Deaf culture, deaf communities, and a strong focus on group rights for people with disabilities, it took me some time to realize how much these approaches were based on, and part of, socio-cultural and political environments in which legal rights were (still) regarded as the most important framework in order to gain citizenship and thus have the possibility to make meaningful claims. In Uganda, legal rights were indeed considered important, but (deaf) people could hardly claim such rights from the Ugandan state. For many of my interlocutors, polities that were less recognized in citizen discussions – those of kin and community, as well as sign-language-related polities – were important in making meaningful claims and thus creating competences for citizenship. How much did the rights-based approach for people with disabilities, including deaf people, change the lives of these people in a country

like Uganda, which was praised as a showcase for best practices with regard to advocating rights for people with disabilities?

During my almost five-year stay in Uganda, I was pleased to coordinate "Disability and Technology," a cooperative international research project between the Ethnographic Museum and the Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, and the Child Health and Development Centre and the Institute of Social Work and Social Administration of Makerere University in Uganda. The project group began with an exchange of five students apiece from Uganda and Switzerland, followed by a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation in their newly launched program, Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development (r4d), from February 2014 until July 2017. The applied approach of our project brought us together with representatives from the Ugandan government and from many international and national NGOs and DPOs of and for people with disabilities. In regularly organized meetings and workshops, I became aware that my doubts about the predominant focus on rights were actually shared by many of these representatives. Their different perspectives, which ran contrary to the leading discourses on rights, helped me to understand better what deafness and disability meant in Uganda and for deaf people in Acholiland, as well as for activists and scholars.

Moving to New York after living in Uganda for five years lent distance to my research, but it simultaneously brought new aspects of my data to the fore. While analyzing my data in Uganda, I felt connected: I was part of a Ugandan scholar network and a network with political representatives, activists, and representatives of NGOs; I had friends willing to answer questions when I didn't understand situations and meanings; and I could always drive back to Gulu to meet with my interlocutors. This situation changed when I moved to New York and everyday life in Uganda became a memory. At the same time, this distance helped me to read and write this thesis from a new "outside" position – from a perspective more aware that readers may have less knowledge about life in Uganda.

This book consists of many different stories, but above all it tells a single story – the story of deaf people's competences for citizenship due to the (re)creation of new sign-language-related polities in Northern Uganda. Each chapter starts with the story of one of my interlocutors (with the exception of Chapters 2 and 7). The stories serve to give the reader an impression of deaf people's lives in Acholiland and present the topics discussed in each chapter. Moreover, the drawings serve as a visual impression of how one of my interlocutors imagined deaf people in specific situations.

I use pseudonyms for all individuals (with the exception of my interpreter) as well as local non-governmental organizations and schools, and I use actual names in the case of national and international organizations. This mixture of both pseudonyms and actual names follows a logic that differentiates between the "private" contents of the statements given by my interlocutors and local NGOs, on the one hand, and statements considered "public," provided by bigger NGOs as well as governmental institutions in the role of representing such institutions. I am aware that deaf friends in Acholi might recognize the people and organizations I am writing about, but I hope that my method does not do harm to anyone.

I also hope that this book will contribute to recent discussions about citizenship and to a greater understanding of the different ways in which (deaf) people (re)create competences for citizenship within different polities. With the concept of "competence for citizenship," my goal is to have developed an approach that is not only helpful for analysis regarding countries in the Global South, but also one that can be used in the context of the Global North. How people actually gain competences for citizenship was – and remains – an important question for future research, as well as for political decisions.

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Abbreviations

ADD	Action for Disability and Development
AVSI	Association of Volunteers in International Service
BA	Bachelor of Arts, academic degree
CBM	Christoffel Blindenmission
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DSI	Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People
DPO	Disabled Persons' Organization
DUG	Deaf Union Gulu
GAPWD	Gulu Association of Persons with Disabilities
FDC	The Forum for Democratic Change
HSMF	Holy Spirit Mobile Forces
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LRA	Lord Resistance Army
MA	Master of Arts, academic degree
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRC	National Resistance Council
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NUDIPU	National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda
NUMAT	Northern Uganda Malaria, AIDS & Tuberculosis Program
PLE	Primary Leaving Examination
PR	Public Relations
PWD	People/Person with Disabilities
RC	Resistance Council
UgSL	Ugandan Sign Language
UN	United Nations
UNAD	Uganda National Association of the Deaf
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Force
WFD	World Federation of the Deaf
WHO	World Health Organization

Foreign Language Terms

ajwaka	traditional healer / spirit medium
gang	village, home
jok (pl. jogi)	spirit(s)
kaka	lineage
muno (pl. munu)	white, European
ngolo	incapacitation
rwod (pl. *rwodi*)	chief, ruler

Map 1. Map of Uganda
Source: Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2006:XXXI.

Map 2. Map of Uganda showing Districts as of March 2016
Source: National Population and Housing Census, Subcounty Report - Northern Region 2014:2.

Prologue

When Joyce started working at the Co-operative Society for People in Need in Gulu, a town in northern Uganda, in 1991, she was the second deaf person to be involved. "I thought that only two deaf people lived in Gulu,"[1] Joyce laughed as she remembered that time.

As the administrative headquarters of the northern region and a relatively safe haven during the time of war between the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government forces (1996–2006), Gulu had become the central location for development work and a magnet for thousands of internally displaced people. Moreover, Gulu became one of the three initial points for a newly formed mobilization program for people with disabilities in northern Uganda.

In 1996, Action for Disability and Development (ADD)[2] organized its first meeting with deaf people. The meeting was announced on the radio, and relatives and friends of deaf people passed along the information. Around 40 deaf people from different sub-counties joined the gathering. Joyce noted, "In that meeting we founded the Deaf Union Gulu (DUG). Then we started to learn Ugandan Sign Language [...] that is where it all started."[3]

Joyce was born in 1961 – a few months before the protectorate of Uganda attained independence – and grew up in a rural area around 8 km from Gulu. Her father, who was a descendant of a Congolese family but

[1] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.

[2] Action for Disability and Development (ADD) is a non-governmental organization based in the United Kingdom. In 2016, ADD changed its name to ADD International. Since then, ADD is no longer an acronym, but is instead understood as a verb ("to add") that refers to contribution (presentation given by Joseph Walugembe, Programme Director of ADD International in Uganda, 1st Stakeholders' Dialogue on Disability and Research, Kampala, July 2, 2015).

[3] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.

had been adopted by an Acholi family,[4] worked as a businessman in Soroti, a town in the northeastern part of Uganda. Her mother was a teacher in a nearby primary school.

Joyce explained that she grew up hearing until a boy accidentally knocked her hard on the head at school. She felt dizzy in the beginning, but then began to hear noises in her ears and subsequently lost most of her hearing abilities by the age of 12. The sounds she is still able to hear do not allow her to understand voices. She can communicate in Luo, often called Acholi (the language spoken in Acholiland) and English through lip-reading and speaking, as well as in Ugandan Sign Language (UgSL). When Joyce talks about herself, she refers to herself as a deaf person in a medical sense as well as socially and politically.

The fear that Joyce might lose her hearing abilities and become deaf, leading to limited opportunities for her future, provoked her parents to engage in an extensive search of healing possibilities, including biomedical treatments and herbal medicine.[5] When she showed no improvement in her situation after the treatments, they traveled 400 km to Mulago Hospital in Kampala – at that time, not an easy undertaking in the slightest. But, as Joyce explained, this was when Idi Amin was president and access to medical treatment was difficult – doctors had fled the country and some, like the doctor who promised to help Joyce, were killed by Amin's troops.

[4] Before the war, land was not only given to lineage or clan members, but was also often given to non-lineage members (including friends). Thus, land tenure was not restricted to biological descendant.

[5] Many deaf people I talked to differentiated between the biomedical treatments expected to be given in hospitals; "herbals" consisting of mixtures of different plants, which are mainly prepared and given by relatives, friends, or neighbors; and treatments given by a "witch doctor." This latter category includes a range of local healers (*ajwaka* in Acholi) with different orientations.

"My mother was crying a lot," Joyce recalled. "She was thinking about me and about how I could manage school and get a job in the future. My father was looking for a school for deaf children, and he found one in Soroti."[6] Instead of feeling happy for the opportunity to join a school with other deaf children, Joyce refused to attend that school: it was too far away from home, her mother, siblings, and friends. Instead, she continued at her primary school as the only deaf student in her class at Bugatira School in Gulu District: "I was sitting close to the teachers, and they tried to help me. All teachers loved me, and I had many friends. I used to do athletics very well."[7]

Joyce looks back positively on this phase of her time in school. Her parents wanted her to continue school at Gulu High, a secondary school in town, but she felt it might be too difficult for her. Instead, she opted to become a typist, studying in a private school, and found a paid job afterwards at St. Mary's Hospital Lacor – mostly referred to as "Lacor Hospital" or HOSPITAL LACOR in UgSL – around 15 km from her home. At St. Mary's Hospital, she helped sort pills for the patients according to their given prescriptions. One of the nurses Joyce worked with suggested that she needed to improve her education: "One sister at St. Mary's Hospital Lacor sent me to a tailoring school [...] I started to study for three years and got a certificate. After the education I met a man, became pregnant, and stayed at home."[8]

[6] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.
[7] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.
[8] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.

Joyce had four partners, but she never married any of them.[9] She has given birth to 10 children in her life. She lost her secondborn child, as well as another child in her fourth month of pregnancy. In 2015, nine of her children were alive, and most of them were staying with her: the youngest was joining primary class 3, while the oldest had finished his bachelor's degree at a university in Kampala that same year.

Although one of Joyce's partners was killed during the war in 1991, war and violence otherwise did not feature largely in her narrations. She never left her home to stay in a camp or town. At night, she explained, she slept in her grass-thatched round hut, the door always open so that people might think no one was home. However, she also said that the LRA did not take or kill deaf people: "One day, I was sleeping in the hut. It was night. And KONY[10] came. I never closed the door. They were looking for boys and hearing people. But deaf persons were not taken."[11] Her children slept hidden in "the bush" nearby.

With her self-confidence and strong will in managing her family issues, Joyce is definitely an exceptional women. Much of the strength she showed might also be the result of her responsibilities and positions as a deaf activist. After Joyce separated from her first husband, she went back to stay with her parents, cooking and selling tea in the nearby market to have some income besides farming on the family's land.

[9] According to Joyce, she never married any of her partners for the following reasons: One partner was killed by government soldiers during fierce gunfire exchanges with the rebels of the Lord Resistance Army; another was abusive, insulting her due to her deafness and accusing her of being unable to communicate. That situation forced her to separate from him. The third and fourth partners were both bewitched by her neighbors over land conflicts. Both left Joyce after impregnating her.

[10] Joseph Kony was the leader of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel force that emerged in 1987 in Acholiland. In spoken language, the LRA is often referred to in using only the name Kony. In Ugandan Sign Language, the sign for KONY points to his former hairstyle (dreadlocks), using both hands to indicate one dreadlock on the side of the head.

[11] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, December 13, 2015.

One day in the market when Joyce was selling tea, two men with mobility disabilities came up to her. "The men were looking at me and asked, 'You, you are deaf?' And I answered, 'Yes.' And they asked me, 'Why do you not come to the office for people with disabilities?' And I said, 'I didn't know about it.'"[12] The two men guided Joyce to the office for people with disabilities in Gulu; it was there that she met another deaf person for the first time. From that day on, every day, after housework and gardening, Joyce walked about 8 km to the office, which at the time was called Co-operative Society for People in Need. "We used local signs to communicate, and sometimes we wrote things down,"[13] explained Joyce.

The co-operative was founded in 1979 – after the fall of Idi Amin – with the intention to help and support people in need. It became the starting point for the program implemented by ADD, and the newly founded Deaf Union Gulu (DUG) quickly established itself as an important facility for Ugandan Sign Language courses. Moreover, the association offered possibilities for paid jobs as sign language instructors, advocates, and representatives.

As the first chair of the nongovernmental organization (NGO), Joyce became involved in national networks: the Ugandan National Association of the Deaf (UNAD), as well as the umbrella organization for all Disabled Persons' Organizations (DPOs), the Kampala-based National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU). She remembered proudly that as a representative for deaf women in Uganda and as a NUDIPU

[12] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.
[13] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.

board member, she had a lot of responsibilities. She learned Ugandan Sign Language and became more informed about Deaf culture and rights.

At the same time, Joyce started to socialize with other deaf people. Together with deaf women, she started a farming group: "We borrowed land and we planted greens. This one we were selling. When the war came seriously, we were afraid to dig in the village. But we used to cooperate and support each other. [...] We used to go and help one another."[14] Within the compound of the newly named Gulu Association for Persons with Disabilities (GAPWD), Joyce held the first church services in Ugandan Sign Language.

Joyce worked for UNAD for six years and NUDIPU for three. She went to villages, churches, local council offices, and markets to mobilize deaf people, and she started training sessions – especially in UgSL. These sessions promoted vocational trainings and workshops and connected deaf people to them. Parents of deaf children were invited as well, which was immensely important, as this led to the opening of the first unit for deaf children at the governmental Gulu Primary School in Gulu in 2005. All of the projects were funded and supported by different national and international NGOs, including ADD, AVSI, NUDIPU, UNAD, and World Vision – to mention only some. Furthermore, all of the funding organizations followed a human-rights-based approach, with the aim to create opportunities for people with disabilities to enhance their agency and wellbeing.

[14] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, December 13, 2015.

The introduction and diffusion of Ugandan Sign Language was of utmost importance. “Before we learned Ugandan Sign Language, we tried all ways for communication: local signs, writing, drawing, speaking. Many deaf people met in camps and towns for the first time during the war. But the problem was communication,”[15] Joyce noted.

The Ugandan National Association of the Deaf (UNAD) started to train 20 deaf people in Ugandan Sign Language and Deaf culture. They also selected Joyce to become a volunteer instructor: together with other deaf people, she went for regular UgSL trainings to Kampala. The newly acquired UgSL knowledge and skills were then spread in workshops throughout Acholiland. “Then I went back to Kampala for one week to learn more,” Joyce explained, “and like that we continued. That is how our sign language started to spread. [...] We went to the villages and mobilized deaf people.”[16] Later, they started to train teachers, police officers, and healthcare personnel at hospitals.

When I met with Joyce for the last time in 2016, one of the most important issues for her was land. Joyce was living on her father’s land. According to the Acholi culture, which is significantly narrated and shaped by the perspective of men in politically or socially recognized positions, the right to own land is only reserved for men, and land cannot be inherited by a woman. Because Joyce has never been married, meaning that payments of marriage have never occurred between her family and the family of one of her partners, neither Joyce nor her

[15] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.
[16] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.

children are regarded as belonging to the father's clan and thus cannot claim access to land from one of her partner's families.

Joyce's only brother, who was part of the movement initiated by Alice Lakwena (Holy Spirit Mobile Forces)[17] during the 1980s, left Uganda and fled with Lakwena to Kenya. Joyce was the secondborn child. "This is the land of my father," she explained to me. "Both my father and mother died. I am now the one taking care of this land. The father of my children and I broke up, and now I am staying on my father's land."[18]

Joyce explained that the land she was currently staying on belonged to the family of her father. The members of the family must agree on the decision to sell the land before proceeding further with negotiations.

However, Joyce's neighbors, who were distant relatives, wanted her to leave. She suspected them of stealing animals from her compound and burning two of her huts. "Sometimes," she added, "they even go to the witch doctor to make me fail."[19] But Joyce was certain that they couldn't, and she believed in her strength as a hardworking woman: "I am now back in the village, taking agriculture seriously. The neighbors around here are quarrelling. They are jealous. People want to chase me away from this land, but I am also stubborn – I have to stay. [...] I am caring for my children alone. I am paying school fees. I am guiding my children so

[17] In 1986, Alice Auma started the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF). The name Lakwena was chosen after a spirit named Lakwena (in Acholi, *lakwena* means "messenger") selected her as its medium in 1985 (Behrend 1999:1, 23). The HSMF combined Christian aspects with "spiritual beliefs and practices and military tactics" (Atkinson 1999:286). Behrend describes the motivation of this "regional cult" as fighting against internal (witchcraft) and external (National Resistance Movement) forces of society. The HSMF was defeated in October and November 1987 by NRM troops, and Alice fled with a few followers to Kenya while the majority tried to return to northern Uganda (Behrend 1999:174).

[18] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, December 13, 2015.

[19] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, December 13, 2015.

that they can do something, like making bricks. I was selling grass, potato leaves, and fruit."[20]

With the official closure of the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps and their inhabitants forced to leave, land conflicts had become a serious challenge for many people. "Now they [deaf people] are fighting for land," Joyce explained. "I hope that the government will engage in these conflicts – and also in human rights."[21]

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[20] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, December 16, 2015.
[21] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, December 16, 2015.

1 Introduction

Joyce's narration gives us an impression of the manifold relationships she is entangled with: networks of kin; social networks with friends, neighbors, and colleagues; national and international organizations; governmental institutions. Moreover, her story provides us with insights into (deaf) people's efforts and opportunities: their allocation of resources, struggles for power, and access to services – like formal education and healthcare – during times of tremendous socio-cultural, political, and economic transitions in the Acholi sub-region (Acholiland), northern Uganda. And last but not least, her story is a story about deaf people's competences for citizenship: their possibilities to make meaningful claims to varying polities, including kin, national and international organizations of and for people with disabilities, sign-language-related networks, or the Ugandan state.

Acholiland – a region named after the ethnic group, Acholi,[22] who mainly inhabited the land – is not unknown to the world. The region gained notoriety through journalistic reports and scholarly work documenting, analyzing, and interpreting the violent conflict between the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) and Ugandan government forces.[23] Between 1986 and 2006, this war was characterized

[22] The origin of the denomination *Acholi* is contested. During the time when Arab traders of slaves and ivory entered the region in 1850s, the terms *Shuuli*, *Sooli*, and *Shooli* were common to describe people living in that region (Finnström 2008:32). People living south of the Acholi sometimes called these people *Gang* or *Gangi*, meaning "home" in Acholi language (Finnström 2008:33). Acholi differ themselves from others as an ethnic group. They call their language Acholi, a language of the Nilotic language family spoken mainly in northern Uganda, while in the southern parts Bantu languages are common.

[23] The war gained international dimensions: The LRA was supported by the Sudanese government from the northern part of Sudan to fight against the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which itself was supported by the Ugandan government. Moreover, the U.S. government included the LRA on its list of terrorist groups (Finnström 2008:9; Behrend 1999:191).

by massive forced movements of more than 90% of the population – displaced and living in urban spaces, either in towns or Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps, heavily dependent on food rations and international aid support (Branch 2013; Finnström 2008; Muyinda 2008).

Moreover, war and displacement generally became associated with a breakdown of social relationships and political structures (Wilhelm-Solomon 2011; Vorhölter 2014) and, according to Oosterom (2011, 2016), led to fewer social interactions, limited political space, and restricted opportunities to engage in the politics of the public sphere (Oosterom 2011:396). With a focus on people's suffering, research and reports too often overlooked new spaces and social relationships created and shaped through organizations and institutions.[24] This is equally true with regard to deaf people in Acholiland.

The perspectives, challenges, and opportunities in sub-Saharan African countries as experienced by deaf people and shaped in polities and manifold social and institutional relationships and frameworks have found limited attention within disability- and deaf-focused studies, in ethnographic monographs, and in the conception of theoretical approaches. Moreover, they have been widely absent within discussions and conceptualization of citizenship. We know little about deaf people's lives during times of war and encampment, nor do we have much awareness of their challenges and possibilities in resettlement dynamics, as they took place in northern Uganda.

[24] An exception is Wilhelm-Solomon (2011), *Displacing AIDS: Therapeutic Transitions in Northern Uganda.*

While cases of "abnormalities," understood as deviations from the norm, can be found[25] within anthropological research, deaf people did not seem to fall into this category.[26] A changed understanding of deafness in the framework of disability and development, and the spread of these new models through projects and programs in countries of the Global South, were what finally brought forward a new interest in deafness and deaf people's lives.

Deaf and disability activists in countries of the Global North were of great importance in this change. Since the 1980s, deaf political and academic activists, especially those in the United States, challenged the understanding of deafness as solely a bodily manifestation and developed the approach of Deaf culture (Padden and Humphries 1988, 2006) – a concept that was later incorporated into the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). In using the political frame of multiculturalism in the United States, Deaf activists claimed to understand deaf people as *Deaf* people – the capital D symbolizing a cultural and linguistic minority (Lane, Harlane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996:408ff). At the same time, a strong disability movement in the UK demanded a shift in the definition of disability, which was mainly framed as a shift from a medical model to a social model. As part of the larger disability rights movement, Deaf people in the United States claimed for new rights; their first triumph came in 1990 with the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which extended anti-discrimination protections to people with disabilities (Nakamura 2006:8). However, a political

[25] One of the most cited earlier anthropological works is Ruth Benedict, "Anthropology and the Abnormal," *Journal of General Psychology* 10 (1934): 59–82.

[26] This can be seen in Neubert and Cloerkes' (2001 [1987]) comparative study, *Behinderung und Behinderte in verschiedenen Kulturen.*

framework of multiculturalism, such as that of the United States, does not exist in the same way in Uganda.

Nevertheless, these new understandings of disability and deafness arrived in Uganda during a time of tremendous international changes in the development sector, as well as substantial national political transitions. Both forms of change fostered a climate that contributed to and supported the translation of ideas and approaches – advocated especially by activists in the Global North – to the Ugandan situation (for more detail, see Chapters 2 and 6). In the new paradigm of decentralized aid, northern and southern NGOs attained more importance in promoting and carrying out development work (Bierschenk et al. 2002:5).

Nationally, the coup of the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda in 1986 was seen as a turn away from the unstable past and a shift in the direction of political stability, economic growth, and peace. During the guerrilla war of the NRA, Resistance Councils (RC), legitimized authorities on the local level, had already been established. This political system was extended to other regions in Uganda after Yoweri Kaguta Museveni became president, and it was subsequently known as the National Resistance Movement (NRM). Idealized as a political approach based on "African tradition systems" (Crook 1999:114) and principles of participatory democracy (Makara et al. 2009:187), every adult was deemed to be a member of the movement. Thus, when the disability movement started in Uganda, aid organizations were eager to support Disabled Persons' Organizations (DPOs) (Blackler 2008:59).

The ideas and emergence of the disability movement in Uganda were inspired by the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (1982),

the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983–1992), and the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) (Ndeezi 2004:17). Within the new social-model understanding of disability, it was no longer seen foremost as an individual bodily condition, but as a complex interaction of bodily, social, and environmental factors (WHO and World Bank 2011). Although medical treatment had remained at the fore, a new technology to enhance the lives of people with disabilities became (human) rights. These changes were instrumental in pushing forward the topic of disability on the international stage, which reached a high point with the recognition of disability as a human rights issue in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

Inspired – and financially and personally supported – by disability activists and ideals of the Global North, the Ugandan disability movement reached Acholiland during the time of forced displacement and encampment and gave the lives of deaf people an unexpected and unintended turn: the introduction of deaf- and disability- centered institutions created deaf- and disability-related polities for the first time and brought about the establishment of a sign-language-related network that was based on, and resulted in, new kinds of recognition. These dynamics, as this thesis will show, led to the transition of deaf people's competences for citizenship.

The disability movement in Uganda formulated its major aim as the "[…] equalization of the rights and opportunities of PWDs with other citizens of Uganda" (Ndeezi 2004:20). In this claim, the inequalities between people with disabilities and other citizens were highlighted, especially regarding access to

education, healthcare, and socio-economic welfare (ibid. 2004 20). A central aspect – or, more accurately, *the* central aspect – of rights for deaf people was the introduction and spread of Ugandan Sign Language, essentially understood in this context as the requirement to access education and employment through which the lives of deaf people can be enhanced. Uganda became the second country in the world to recognize sign language as an official language in its constitution in 1995 (Lule and Wallin 2010:114).

Today, Uganda is praised as a showcase of best practices with regard to advocating the rights of people with disabilities, not only for sub-Saharan Africa, but worldwide (Abimanyi-Ochom and Mannan 2014:1; Lang and Murangira 2009). Highlighted examples usually include the laws incorporated into the national legal framework, the ratification of several international conventions, the high number of elected persons with disabilities in the political system,[27] and the strong disability movement. These aspects, according to many researchers and politicians, have demonstrated the success of Uganda's disability-friendly politics over the past 30 years (Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck 2015).

Despite this robust legal framework in Uganda, researchers and practitioners point to a gap between the ratification of rights and their implementation. "There has been too much focus on 'rights talk' and its 'emancipatory rhetoric,' and too little attention accorded the contexts, meanings and practices that make citizenship possible for some and a far-fetched dream for most," states Nyers (2007:3), underscoring the dilemma at hand: the success story stops at the structural level.

[27] 334,528 were elected as members with disabilities in councils and committees (The Electoral Commission: The Republic of Uganda; 2015/2016 General Elections Report; submitted to parliament through the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, August 2016).

Little is known about how and in which ways the rights-based approach has shaped the lives of people with disabilities. In other words, little is known about how deaf people, as part of the group of people with disabilities according to the Ugandan political framework, have gained and transformed their competences for citizenship over the course of the changing political framework and landscape of actors in Uganda. Moreover, my research has shown that claiming rights from the Ugandan state is not only regarded as difficult, with uncertain results, but can even be counterproductive, harming other important polities that include deaf people (see Chapters 4 and 5 for more detail). What kinds of polities recognize deaf people? Where have deaf people the possibility to set meaningful claims? How have deaf people (re)create competences for citizenship?

Competence for citizenship in this thesis is understood as being part of the (re)creation of *polities* and having the possibility to set meaningful claims within such polities. Polities are constituted of what are called *acts of citizenship*. Isin (2009), who holds a professorship in politics and international studies, brought forward the concept of *acts of citizenship*, which binds together actors (individuals, networks, states, NGOs, etc.), sites (voting, social security, bodies, courts, networks, borders, etc.), and scales (urban, regional, national, etc.) (Isin 2009:371). *Acts of citizenship* create and/or transform the position of an actor from an outsider to an insider, or claimant of rights. To become an insider means "to be one who has mastered modes and forms of conduct that are appropriate to being an insider" (Isin 2009:372).

Depending on the acts in which such polities are (re)created, acts of becoming an insider, becoming part of a polity, can be manifold. As I will show in

this thesis, claiming rights in deaf-and disability-related polities differ in important aspects from claiming rights within the polity of kin, for example. In Joyce's example, she mentioned the centrality of legal rights in the polity set up by deaf- and disability-related institutions. Legal rights can be seen as important modes and play an essential role in making meaningful claims within this polity – modes that play less of a role within the possibility of claiming rights within the polity of kin.

Thus, claiming and making claims are inevitably based in relations. Moreover, recognition is a *pre-condition* of being part of such polities and thus of having the possibility to make meaningful claims – it is not, as it is commonly thought in regard to legal recognition, only the *result* of claim-making.

Joyce wanted to stay at home so that she could attend a nearby school instead of being sent to a boarding school for deaf children. She made the claim of deciding which school she wanted to attend. Her claim as a child had been set in the polity consisting mainly of kin – in this special case, her parents were mentioned as important in giving her the possibility to make this claim. Moreover, recognition is a pre-condition to obtain the possibility to make such claims, and with that to (re)create competence for citizenship in the polity consisting of kin. Moreover, in Acholiland, kin is of major importance in accessing land; as Joyce's case shows, the possibility to claim land is shaped by the quality of social relationships (see also Chapter 5).

We can find different polities beyond the state of which deaf people are a part and which are (re)created and changed by them. Becoming an insider – being recognized in such polities – opens up possibilities to make claims and re(create)

competences for citizenship. Different polities offer different kinds of possibilities and call for different practices to make meaningful claims.

In this thesis, I argue that despite the horrific wartime experiences of deaf people, their encampment and migration to urban spaces, combined with the introduction of the disability movement, the appropriation and spread of Ugandan Sign Language, and coordinated institutional and political efforts, together created new forms and practices of recognition. New polities were created and others transformed by deaf people – shaping competences for citizenship in important ways.

Based on qualitative research I conducted between 2009 and 2016 in Acholiland, northern Uganda, I will follow practices leading to transitions of competences for citizenship for deaf people between the 1970s and 2016. The historical perspective enables me to present a picture characterized by ongoing and multiple transitions of competences for citizenship emerging alongside the creation of new polities. (Re)creating competence for citizenship is strongly shaped, as I will show, in various ways of recognition.

Because of its relative isolation from national and international developments, the region of Acholiland is interesting and unique in this context. The introduction of disability programs, including deaf-focused initiatives, began in the time of conflict, and they were few and centralized in the beginning. Before encampment, most of the population was scattered across villages and homesteads; deaf people rarely knew or met one another, let alone felt close to one another. Isolated from other "disability developments," especially those in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, transitions of competences for citizenship – or the transition of

possibilities to make claims – through the introduction of deaf- and disability-related institutions can be traced within a single generation. Moreover, spatial transitions – both encampment and resettlement – significantly shaped channels and opportunities for new ways of social engagement, accessing resources, belonging, and creating identities, all of which are important in establishing competence for citizenship.

Most research about deaf people in countries of the Global South has brought into focus deaf communities and/or cultures (see e.g. Lee 2012; Friedner 2015), but only a few show how deaf persons are interrelated and act within their broader societies (see e.g. Kusters 2014). Moreover, anthropological studies have provided important insights in questioning dominant approaches – developed mainly in societies of the Global North – and have given new perspectives to form a deeper understanding of complex realities and lived experiences of people with disabilities, including deaf people and those in African countries (Ingstad and Whyte 1995, 2007; Devlieger, Rusch, and Pfeiffer 2007). This thesis contributes to this growing body of work. By focusing on competences for citizenship, this work shows novel insights into deaf people's possibilities of claim-making within diverse social and institutional networks and frameworks – polities – and thus illustrates the transitions of deaf people's experiences and lived realities during a time of tremendous changes in Acholiland.

1.1 Theoretical approach and analytical concepts

As outlined above, this thesis aims to understand dynamics of citizenship from the perspective of deaf people by focusing on transitions of competences for citizenship. Each of the coming chapters will deepen the theoretical approach by introducing important analytical concepts and strengthening the understanding of the central conceptual approach. However, in this chapter, I establish the broad theoretical framework through the introduction of central concepts that guide my work.

1.1.1 Citizenship and Polity

I have mentioned before that acts of citizenship (re)create polities. Deriving from the Greek *politeia* "citizenship, government," from *politēs* "citizen," from *polis* "city" (Oxford English Dictionary),[28] in ancient Greece, the polity in question was the city-state and was later applied to the (nation-)state (Kivisto and Faist 2007). Citizenship means to be part of a polity and as such is inevitably inclusive as well as exclusive (ibid.). Moreover, polity involves an idea or ideal of duties and responsibilities and the possibility to make claims as a recognized member.

Since the 1980s, this primarily state-centered conceptualization and application of citizenship has been increasingly questioned, and multiple polities for citizenship have been demonstrated. Being a member, or (re)creating different polities, fundamentally shapes not only what Isin has called "acts of citizenship," but influence competences for citizenship, and thus equality and wellbeing, in

[28] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/polity, accessed October 20, 2017.

important ways. In the following section, I will briefly explain this approach in more detail to illustrate how (competence for) citizenship has been conceptualized over time.

In its origins in Greece, and later in the context of a (nation-)state, citizenship has been understood as the possibility to make meaningful claims and be recognized as a citizen within the city-state. Thomas Humphrey Marshall (1950) is the most prominent representative of this approach. Marshall defined citizenship as the relationship between the individual rights-bearer (the citizen) and the (nation-)state – a concept in which equality and wellbeing are regulated through laws and rights. He distinguished three types of citizenship that have emerged from a developmental perspective over the past three centuries in England: *civil citizenship* emerged in the 18th century, *political citizenship* in the 19th century, and *social citizenship*, the final stage of development, in the 20th century. Although the universal ideal of citizenship from this perspective has been criticized, its core – understanding citizenship as a relationship between the individual and the (nation-)state based on rights and obligations – is still one of the most important definitions and ideals of citizenship.

Inclusion in the polity of the (nation-)state is created through legal recognition. Competence for citizenship in this concrete approach lies within the knowledge of individual citizens, who are able to fulfill their responsibilities as well as make their claims against the state. The central caretaker of citizenship is the state, with its legal, medical, and educational services to which access can be claimed.

As it turns out, since the publication of Marshall's prominent and influential developmental approach to citizenship in 1950, citizenship can hardly be defined in a universal way. Instead, citizenship, its definition, and its practices are based in many sites and shaped by different actors. Since the 1980s, contributions from feminist perspectives have marked what Steenbergen (1994:2) has called the "crisis of citizenship," characterized by an increasing emphasis on relationships beyond the state that thus shifts focus to the *use* of citizenship. Moreover, the ideal of modern state citizenship as outlined by Marshall has been increasingly challenged in favor of recognizing the importance of other relationships in practices of claiming rights (Donati 1995; Steenbergen 1994). The (nation-)state is no longer the only responsible polity for ensuring that the lives of citizens are secure. Instead, other social and institutional networks have been brought to the center in which meaningful claims are made. Thus, other actors, sites, and scales – previously either unrecognized or non-existent – have now come to the fore, where claims are set that are of major importance with regard to the wellbeing of the people. These new conceptualizations of citizenship have shown that citizenship has no universal definition of sites, scales, and actors; it is contested as a political tool as well as a theoretical approach and concept.[29]

Joyce's story gives us insight into different sites, scales and actors: her family, friends, peers, colleagues, disability-centered institutions, and the state are all actors, creating important relationships throughout local, regional, national, and international scales and sites. Citizenship is no longer seen as a status or practice

[29] This can be seen in the manifold terms for citizenship: feminist citizenship (Lister 1997), flexible citizenship (Ong 1999), biological citizenship (Petryna 2004), and deaf citizenship (Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck 2015); see also Kivisto and Faist (2007).

solely defined and based in the relationship between a (nation-)state and its citizen, but such relationships stand out as one possible way to gain competence for citizenship – next to many others important to the struggle for resources and practice to gain social wellbeing.

Anthropological studies have especially contributed to a citizenship perspective in which these other ways and (re)creations of citizenship have been taken into focus. This is a perspective that sees "from below": Instead of only viewing citizenship as a constellation and idea of authorities and regulated through them, different ways of making claims have been brought to the fore. One of the most important of anthropologists' contributions to debates surrounding citizenship is an approach that places citizenship mostly within everyday life: as a process, as belonging, and as membership anchored in a political community beyond the national scale (Caglar 2015:639–40). These studies have shown that the relationship between the state and the individual does not guarantee citizenship, but instead that other relationships within and beyond societies are of importance in order to claim rights as well as take responsibilities (ibid. 2015:637).

With this shift, empirical studies that had thus far played a subordinate role in theoretical conceptualization began to gain importance (Balaton-Chrimes 2016:21; Lister 2007:58). Citizenship, as these perspectives suggest, is fundamentally social; in Eckert's words, "the understanding of rights and the perception of oneself as a right-bearing subject emerge in social relations, collectively with others or by comparison to others, and by recognizing the similarities in forms of subjection and in the needs of life" (Eckert 2011:313).

As shown by Petryna in her work on biological citizenship, making meaningful claims is generated in institutions and social arrangements: the radiation-related injured biology of a population due to Chernobyl became the basis for social membership and staking claims to citizenship (2010:199, 207). New institutions and technologies for medical records created the basis for new social arrangements and also changed political dimensions. Claims of citizenship emerged as both a means and a result of it.

In Uganda, the new deaf- and disability-related polities, strongly influenced and financially supported by organizations and approaches of the Global North, created another kind of legal recognition for people with disabilities and new possibilities to set claims. However – in contrast to what Petryna's work highlighted, where such claims led to individual access of financial resources – the rights-based approach of deaf-and disability-related organizations focuses mainly on the improvement of service provision in countries of the Global South.

In Uganda, service provision of the state, like education, is limited and does not reach all people in the same way, despite being recognized as rights in the constitution. Becoming part of other polities – in the case of deaf people, deaf- and disability-related polities – can play a crucial role in contributing to individual possibilities and access to resources.

For deaf people in Acholiland, claims were made in different kinds of social and institutional polities (within the family, community, friends, etc.), pre-conditioning different kinds of recognition. (Re)creating competences for citizenship and making claims involves struggles of power, takes place in discussions and institutions, and creates new competences and claims.

1.1.2 Competence

Citizenship, as it is used in this thesis, not only indicate "membership" of a polity. Joyce, for example, became part of a deaf-related polity created mainly by institutions and organizations, but her possibilities to make meaningful claims within this polity were limited. At the same time, she created new friendships based on sign language. Together with other deaf women, she could make meaningful claims, and she received access to additional land used to gain further income. It is not only membership of a polity as such, but the ability to set meaningful claims within it, that is what I call *competence for citizenship*. What constitutes competence?

The term "competence" has been widely absent in disability- and deaf-related anthropological studies as well as in regard to citizenship. Reasons for this can be found in Norris' (1991) article: the term "competence" was foremost associated with and connected to individual abilities, skills, and knowledge. Norris stated that the term reflects the dominance of psychological research and explanation in education and has been largely stripped of its social content and context (1991:337). Thus, competence became a kind of neutral quality of a person, regardless of the individual measured or the parameters according to which they are examined.

One of the earlier anthropological contributions to an understanding of perspectives of people with disabilities is the anthropologist and psychologist Robert B. Edgerton's (1993 [1965]) *The Cloak of Competence*. In his research,

undertaken in 1960–61, he followed released patients with mild mental disabilities[30] of the Pacific State Hospital, a state institution for the mentally retarded in the United States. Edgerton realized that studies about the released patients found – often surprisingly or unexpectedly – that the majority of them were able to manage life on their own "on the outs" (Edgerton xii), but that such studies could not explain why this was the case for some patients and not for others.

The major question Edgerton follows in his book addresses how mentally retarded people cope with their relative incompetence "on the outs." He sets two different kinds of criteria for (in)competence: one from a psychological perspective[31] and another focused on competence for independent living, or living "on the outs."[32] Critics have argued that Edgerton holds onto his definition of these people as incompetent despite showing their competence for independent living. He made them incompetent competent persons, which he describes with the term "cloak": people in his research appropriate special practices and skills that they regard of importance to be recognized and fit into what they experience or imagine as normal.

What is interesting for my conceptualization are exactly these different sets of competence definitions: the hospital and psychological approach, on the one

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[30] According to Edgerton, at the time when he undertook his research, the common term was "mental retardates" or even "morons." The preferred term today is "persons with mental retardation" – a change that goes along with centering on the person and not the sickness (1993:xi). He points to the fact that this is a category based on a diagnosis that is influenced by social and cultural considerations (ibid.:x–xi). Not all people share a common condition produced by a specifiable etiology (ibid.:2): "For example, deafness and psychosis are but two conditions that could cause an inadequacy of 'adaptive behavior' in a person of normal intelligence" (ibid.:3). Mild mental retardation is a social phenomenon (ibid.:5).

[31] It is not clear which measurements Edgerton used. He mentions the IQ as a measurement of the intellect as well as social competence and emotional stability (1993:5).

[32] The ranking of aspects of successful independent living indicated their competence to manage their own lives without the aid or control of the institution (ibid.:11). To "live on their own" meant to live on their own resources and manage their own lives without the aid or control of the institution or the direct care of parents or other relatives (ibid.:9).

hand, and the approach based on social networks of people "on the outs," on the other. These two sets of competences create two different polities: an institute-based polity of the hospital following the criteria of psychology, and the polity of "the outs," which is created through diverse social relationships. This creation of divergent polities – one institutional and one based on other social relationships – can also be seen in the case of deaf people in Acholiland when a new deaf- and disability-related polity created space to build a sign-language-related social network.

Competence, as Edgerton's study shows, is both dependent on the environment and relative to it. According to Edgerton, one's success in, or competence for, independent living in these cases were based on becoming recognized as an insider "on the outs" – recognized as a friend, partner, or employee, and thus gaining competence for living "on the outs." In other words, competence is always context-based and always asks the question, "Competence for what?"

Based on Jenkins' argument, competence in this thesis is defined as "the capacity or potential for adequate functioning-in-context as a socialised human" (Jenkins 1998:1). The term "adequate functioning" triggers the question: What is adequate functioning, and who decides what it is?

With regard to deaf people in Acholiland, the new deaf- and disability-related institutions created a new category of deaf persons, which changed deaf people's understanding of themselves as deaf persons – as well as their recognition by other people, and thus their social relationships – in important ways. This new understanding of disability and deafness introduced new ways of positioning oneself

in relation to others. Thus, it not only shaped deaf people's social relationships as newly defined persons with disabilities, but also shaped other relationships.

All competence is defined by others, situationally specific, and based on various relations; it is not just individually based. Furthermore, competence depends on the judgment and recognition of others. Competence is constituted by recognition; in the context of citizenship, it means becoming part of polities to be able to set meaningful claims within them.

1.1.3 Competence for citizenship

When applying these thoughts to practices of citizenship, competence for citizenship does not simply entail individual skills, knowledge, or abilities, as is the case in Marshall's understanding and conceptualization of citizenship. In Marshall's approach, a "good citizen" is a person who possesses the required knowledge and skills to take over his or her role as a citizen – defined by the legal rights and obligations of a (nation-)state. This perspective undoubtedly begs the question: What kinds of abilities are actually needed to become a citizen? And consequently, do all citizens (by status) possess them, or are all citizens able to obtain them? The answer, according to Marshall, is negative: children, for example, although they might be citizens of a state, are not expected to enjoy all rights connected to their status as citizens; instead, they are "future citizens." However, people with profound disabilities have also been denied the required abilities and, consequently, full citizenship (Vorhaus 2005:461). The liberal concept of Marshall's conceptualization of citizenship, based on one's status as citizen of a (nation-)state, hinges on

unrealistic assumptions; its achievement is more possible for adults who are sufficiently mentally able and possess access to knowledge of the skills required.

In this thesis, competence for citizenship means gaining possibilities – possibilities to become involved with, or to become an insider, in different polities, and the possibility to set meaningful claims with regard to wellbeing. In my conceptualization, I bring relationships, qualities, and transitions into focus. This approach is inspired, on the one hand, by anthropological approaches to citizenship "from below," showing that citizenship is created within and according to different polities even beyond the (nation-)state, as well as by what Ingold (2011:153) has called the "dwelling perspective."

Using Ingold's perspective, the static, structural approach will be questioned and complex relationships will be brought into focus. For Ingold, the "dwelling perspective" takes the world as continually coming into being around the inhabitant, while what he calls the "building perspective" contends that the form and meaning of the world have already been defined. Within the dwelling perspective, people and social networks come into being through practices of socially situated agents. This approach shifts the perspective away from socio-cultural aspects as meaning, giving patterns or structures to dynamics in practical activities. Regular patterns of life activities are constituted, maintained, and changed through the incorporation of inhabitants (ibid.:153).

Central to this perspective are the relations of the inhabitants and their "positions vis-à-vis one another in the relational field" (Ingold 2011:149). This offers a way to analyze the dynamics not only of social relations, but of enfolded social networks – social relational fields (Ingold 1991). This perspective was useful

to me in recognizing the various relationships deaf people created and maintained, emphasizing their social relational fields. Furthermore, this perspective was helpful as an analytical entry to connecting the acts, sites, actors, and scales (Isin 2009) in the processes of gaining recognition within different polities and thus (re)creating competence for citizenship.

Citizenship continually comes into being. (In)competence for citizenship is thus based, defined, created, and shaped by the actors, acts, sites, and scales that constitute polities; it does not point to individual knowledge, skills, or abilities, but to the dynamics in the (re)creation of polities. Different kinds of networks constituting polities (of kin, friendships, work, institutions, organizations, state, etc.) shape competences for citizenship in different ways. The Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) in Uganda, for example, follow a rights-based approach strongly connected to the ideals of disability organizations and institutions of the Global North (see Chapter 6). To become recognized as a DPO and be able to receive funding means learning the language and modes of the rights-based approach, including ideas fundamental to the understanding of disability as a social model. At the same time, the body plays an important role in decisions of who is actually regarded as a person with disability. Deafness cannot be claimed without hearing loss (see Chapter 4).

As I have previously mentioned, competences for citizenship within different polities are constituted and experienced in and through different kinds of recognition over time. They might be recognized and experienced through affection or sympathy, through solidarity or loyalty, or through a legal framework. I will show that the affection of family members was especially crucial for deaf children in the

creation of competences for citizenship (see Chapter 3). Through the spread of Ugandan Sign Language among deaf people, new deaf-related social networks were created in which deaf people recognized each other as deaf persons in contrast to hearing people (see Chapter 4). These new solidarities also shaped recognition in other social networks or polities of predominantly hearing people (Chapter 5). In contrast to the creation of competences for citizenship within these polities beyond the state, national disability politics targets the legal recognition of people with disabilities (Chapter 6).

To be able to make claims for citizenship, recognition is key. In his book *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflict* (1995), Honneth distinguishes three kinds of basic recognition and spheres of interaction: love, rights, and solidarity, considering there to be three forms of integration into society: the first occurs via emotional bonds, the second via granting of rights, and the third via a shared orientation to value (Honneth 1995:94). Despite the fact that Honneth sees citizenship as solely state-related in the relationship of state and individual right-bearer, his theoretical explanations also offer an entry point for other kinds of recognition, which, as I will show, constitute competences for citizenship in important ways.

To become competent for citizenship means being recognized and, as such, being involved in the (re)creation of polities; at the same time, it means having the possibility to make meaningful claims. Competence for citizenship is constituted in social and institutional networks in which norms and frames, forms and articulations of claim-making are accepted, used, and set. I will now differentiate

between two kinds of relational fields or polities in which competences are created, namely shared and distributed competence for citizenship.

1.1.4 Shared and distributed competence for citizenship

I would first like to return to Edgerton's *The Cloak of Competence*. In this book, Edgerton argued against the idea that successful adaptation – the competence to live "on the outs" – was primarily a function of a person's intelligence or personality. As previously mentioned, his study highlighted the importance of the social, cultural, and economic environment (Edgerton 1993:xiii). Competence to live "on the outs" is not just an individual ability or based on individual knowledge, but is based on the recognition and concrete support experienced in manifold social relationships. Thus, competences for independent living can be better understood as distributed.

The concept of *distributed competence* has been used in scholarly approaches to learning and education. Harkins and Kubik, for example, use the approach of distributed competence to describe, analyze, and channel the growing opportunities to include actors and technologies from different places in order to "successfully complete decisions and tasks" (Harkins and Kubik 2000:11). In their case of the "post-education paradigm," humans and non-humans both contribute to a generation of knowledge in different ways. Booth and Booth (1998) provide another empirical example in which distributed competences take place: by examining a social network of care practices in England, they show that parenting is in fact not something provided only by parents, but is a feature of the parents' social network. Within this network, many different actors contribute in many different ways. From

the perspective of the child and with a focus on care, competence for parenting in this case is distributed.

Thus, competence, as illustrated in these examples, not only refers to individual abilities or the abilities of an individual person, but is generated by a variety of actors with regard to a set aim. As such, an approach that examines distributed competence does not take into focus predefined roles and activities, but instead considers how different actors shape competence in different ways. I will use this kind of analytical framework to analyze how competences for citizenship are shaped from the perspective of deaf people in northern Uganda within their life cycles, according to gender as well as the spatial, socio-political, and economic transitions of encampment and processes of resettlement.

The second concept, *shared competence,* is inspired by the work of Lave and Wenger (2011) and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015), whose research focuses on *communities of practice*: "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015:1). Communities of practice are held together by a common interest. Within such networks, the members value their collective competence and learn from one another. Members are engaged in joint activities and discussions, help one another, and share information. Unlike the idea of distributed competence, in which actors contribute in different ways, members in a community of practice develop a shared repertoire of resources (experiences, stories, tools, etc.) – in short, a shared practice (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015:2). Ugandan Sign Language can be seen as one such shared practice, which can not only be considered a recently introduced mode of communication,

but a practice that created a new kind and understanding of belonging. As this thesis will show, demarcating the line between insider and outsider – not only of states, but also of other polities – shapes the lives of people in important ways.

To summarize this theoretical and conceptual overview: Central to the following analysis is the concept of *competence for citizenship,* understood as the (re)creation of polities and the possibilities to make meaningful claims as an insider. I differentiate between two dynamics important to (re)create such polities: *distributed and shared competences for citizenship*. Competences for citizenship are based in the (re)creation of polities, of which recognition must be seen as one important prerequisite. The relational theoretical frame of competence for citizenship, as it is used in this dissertation, draws on the trifecta of Ingold's (2011) *dwelling perspective*, Honneth's (1995) *recognition* approach, and Isin's (2009) concept of *acts of citizenship*.

1.2 Structure of thesis

After this introduction, Chapter 2, **The Setting and Methods Applied**, focuses on the use of the term "citizenship" in the Ugandan context from a historical perspective. In analyzing how citizenship has been used foremost as a political tool and less as an analytical concept, this chapter investigates the dominant discourses of citizenship starting from colonial times. Thus far, the term "citizenship" has only been understood in many citizen discussions as state- related, while other polities – especially ethnic groups, in this context – have been viewed as opposing the ideal of citizenship. In analyzing the use of the term "citizenship" in Uganda, I will show what kinds of ideals of citizenship were set by the protectorate and, later, the

Ugandan state, with special focus on the integration of Acholiland into these polities. The disability movement in Uganda became a model example of a new kind of citizenship: institutions of people with disabilities created new sites of recognition and new possibilities to claim citizenship. The history of citizenship, as I will argue in this chapter, is a history of dominant definitions of citizenship by authorities according to functional, biological, economic, and even medical modes of inclusion.

Chapters 3 to 5 unfold and analyze different polities important for deaf people to (re)create citizenship. I will address the issues of children's competences for citizenship, the creation of new deaf- and disability-related polities, and the (re)creation of deaf people's esteem and transition of polities. These chapters are built on two levels: they open with an excerpt of deaf people's lives, followed by an analytical section. Each follows a roughly chronological outline of life cycles and the wider socio-political and spatial transition from encampment to resettlement in Acholiland. While most scholarly work structures this time period into pre-war, war, and post-war, each characterized by special dynamics, I follow a different timeline. The stories of the interlocutors in my study have shown that this was not experienced in such a clear-cut way. Although war – and, for many, encampment – was a central feature for all interlocutors, they experienced challenges in different intensities and for differing amounts of time, and for the older participants, war had been part of their lives even before this period. Within my participants' narrations, the most central aspects in their lives were the connection and creation of social relationships with other deaf people and the introduction of UgSL.

Deaf Children's Competences for Citizenship (Chapter 3) takes into view the qualities of social relationships emotionally remembered by deaf people. This

chapter centers around how deaf people experience their possibilities and ways of making claims. I argue that deaf children's competences for citizenship are based in the recognition distributed in the social relational field of what Honneth has called "loving relationships," especially those with kin. As the case of Joyce showed, through caring relationships, she felt recognized and loved. Thus, through practices of care, recognition is expressed and experienced. Moreover, by listening to Joyce's wish to be sent to a nearby school can be seen as a "love-based" caring expression of kin; for her, caring relationships constituted competences for citizenship.

The concept of *rights* refers not to a constitutional definition, but to the relational position of the child and his or her claim against other agents, who are often peers. This chapter will deepen the concept of *distributed competences* for citizenship alongside an understanding of conceptualizing kin as a polity. In using Honneth's idea of *love-based recognition*, I will show how this recognition is not only important to make meaningful claims for citizenship, but also how recognition and thus competences for citizenship are distributed.

In Chapter 4, **The Introduction of Deaf-Related Polities and the Creation of Sign- Language-Related Polities**, I focus on the establishment and introduction of deaf- and disability-related institutions, paying special attention to deaf-related programs and projects in Acholiland. While in the previous chapter the social relational field of kin was shown as important for children to gain competence for citizenship, the introduction of new institutions and the appropriation of modes and practices created new forms and ways of recognition. When it was introduced, the rights-based approach led to an establishment of institutions and organizations that shaped deaf- and disability-related socialities and

were crucial to obtain access to resources. In the description of these new and shared competences for citizenship, UgSL will be given special emphasis.

To be recognized as a person with disability in Uganda, one's body and its functionality are foregrounded. At the same time, these institutions create space for the establishment of sign-language-related polities. I will highlight what Honneth called *solidarity-based recognition* as a special kind of way to gain competence for citizenship and show that out of the new disability- and deaf-related polities, a sign-language-related polity – and consequently solidarity-based recognition – began to form.

Chapter 5, **Extending the Sign-Language-Related Polity,** deals with the resettlement process and its dynamics, emphasizing the ways in which shared and distributed competences are created and shape each other. I will highlight different aspects that influence people's decisions to return home or to create a new home in the resettlement processes. Furthermore, I will show the dynamics through which the town of Gulu and its deaf socialities became a magnet, especially for young deaf people. Working in town was not only connected to economic opportunities, but was set in the context of sign language socialities. Some deaf people dreamed of being able to buy their own land close to Gulu, in a good neighborhood and in cooperation with neighbors who already knew UgSL and welcomed the arrival of deaf people. This chapter examines the qualities of social relationships important for deaf people's livelihood, and the consequent gain of competences for citizenship, in the time of war and encampment. Moreover, it shows that becoming part of sign-language-related polities can be both supportive and contradictory to polities of kin.

Chapter 6, **Creating Competence for Citizenship for Whom? The Dilemma of the Rights-Based Approach for People with Disabilities**, gives special focus to rights and responsibilities in relationships with the state, the disability movement, and other non-governmental organizations. It underlines the important role of the state in attracting external funding resources while simultaneously pointing to the creation of a new exclusive polity of primarily well-educated male disability activists. Moreover, I argue that Uganda's disability success story is strongly shaped through the recognition of the disability movement as part of the NRM, Uganda's leading political movement, which later became a political party. In other words, competences for citizenship were created both through being part of the disability movement and a recognized member of national politics in Uganda.

2 The Setting and Methods Applied

This chapter serves to situate the following analysis (Chapters 3 to 6) within broader discussions of citizenship in Uganda. In applying the concept of *competence for citizenship*, I will challenge the dominant discourses about citizenship in the context of Uganda, which regard citizenship foremost as a relationship between the (nation) state and its citizens. Subsequently, I will narrow the field of interest to my research setting and how it has shaped my choices of methods applied.

In the first part of this chapter, I will give insight into three polities that dominate citizenship debates in the context of Uganda: the protectorate Uganda, the independent state Uganda, and the Ugandan disability movement. The citizenship discussions about these three polities are foregrounded in an understanding of citizenship as legal recognition. In these discourses, no clear differentiation is made between citizenship as a political tool and citizenship as an analytical concept – indeed, the use of the term "citizenship" reflects the perspective of ruling authorities. In all three discussions, citizenship is understood as a relationship between the state and its citizens. This has led to a situation in which other polities, e.g., polities of lineages or kin, have been denied the constitutive momentum of citizenship and either disregarded in these discussions or set in opposition to the idea of citizenship itself.

Legal recognition does not inevitably bring about possibilities to make meaningful claims, as this chapter will show. Other polities are of major importance to make meaningful claims and thus gain competence for citizenship. This chapter will examine the disconnection between legal recognition as a citizen and

competences for citizenship, simultaneously highlighting polities disregarded in the dominant citizenship discourses.

Subsequent to these insights, I will show how the methodology is intertwined with my research experiences and observations, leading to the conceptual framework of competence for citizenship.

2.1 Citizens and the functional inclusion of subjects in protectorate Uganda

The British Protectorate of Uganda (1896–1962), a protectorate of the British Empire, was established in 1894 and extended the territory from Buganda Kingdom to a territory that roughly corresponds with today's borders of Uganda (Map 1). The establishment of the protectorate involved a new legally manifested hierarchical positioning of British persons as citizens and "British protected persons" as those people who lived within the borders of the protectorate. Based on this understanding, the historical beginning of citizenship in Uganda has been placed within colonial times and is mainly described as a history of *citizens* and *subjects*. The Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani is perhaps the most cited political scientist regarding citizenship in sub-Saharan Africa. In his book *Citizen and Subject* (2004 [1996]), he establishes key terms in the discussion about citizenship in sub-Saharan Africa and draws a strong connection between the understanding of citizenship during colonial times and today's *bifurcated* state – a state that contains a dual political power under a single hegemonic authority and draws on civil and ethnic rights (ibid.:18).

With the introduction of citizenship, British colonists formulated a legal status: only the British formally had status as *citizens* and could make meaningful claims within the polity of the protectorate, while indigenous people or *subjects*, as Mamdani (2002) writes, defined as British protected persons, could not (Adejumobi 2001; Mamdani 2004). Subjects were associated with tradition and customs, while citizens had a status associated with rights, duties, and privileges (Adejumobi 2001:156). Citizens and subjects embody the British hegemonic politics, symbolizing the opposition of civilization and centrally organized administration to uncivilized and tribally organized social groups. The terms are used as an expression to demarcate between rural and urban or customary and civil laws (Mamdani 2004:18). Subjects had no legal rights, nor could they make meaningful claims within the protectorate; instead, they became included in the protectorate according to the economic interests of the British Empire.

In the following section, I will focus on the functional political and economic division of the protectorate – as well as its population – as part of the primarily economic interests of colonialism (Adejumobi 2001:156). Different parts of the protectorate became economically and politically involved in it to different extents. In the time of the British Protectorate of Uganda, the people within the new borders were grouped in kingdoms and tribes (e.g., Acholi) based on perceived or presumed common origins, political organizations, languages, and cultures, and connected to special regions and properties of land.[1] In this scheme, Buganda, a kingdom in central Uganda, became the economic center, and the qualified workers in the colonial administration were foremost Luganda-speaking. While eastern

[1] See Atkinson (1989 and 2010) for discussions about Acholi, especially before 1800, and Girlings'

Uganda was strongly involved economically – in the production of cotton, for example – the northern (e.g., Acholiland) and western areas were regarded as less productive. To British colonialists, they served as a kind of reservoir of agricultural workers to be recruited for military service, civil service, and the police force (Schubert 2005:31). Thus, the natural resources of the regions played a major role regarding the possibilities and ways of becoming involved in the protectorate.

Acholiland has been described as a region that was dry and only sparsely populated, far from the center of colonial administration in the Buganda Kingdom. It was not of great interest to the British during the first colonial period, as the historian Ronald R. Atkinson (2010 [1999]:4) mentions in his historical monograph *The Roots of Ethnicity: Origins of the Acholi of Uganda*. In 1902, Acholiland was officially recognized as a district of the Uganda Protectorate (ibid.:5).

Acholi did not become involved due to their natural or economic resources, but because of cultural and bodily stereotypes. Such stereotypes imposed on the Acholi a presumed physical condition of militaristic and warlike, characteristics given by the British that made them appear especially attractive for inclusion in the colonial army and police force (Atkinson 2010:6, 277). Many Acholi served the British as soldiers. According to Schubert, in 1940, before recruitment began for the Second World War, 60% of the soldiers in Uganda were Acholi; the rest were foremost from the Lango, Teso, or West Nile regions. This pattern was continued throughout the 1950s (Schubert 2005:47).

To become included in the polity of the protectorate – to become part of the political administrative, military, and economic colonial system – promised economic perspectives, prestige, and access to colonial privileges – even for those

categorized as British protected persons (Mohan and Holland 2001:179; Schubert 2005:45). People's ability to become included seemed to be first of all the decision of British colonists, made along the functional division of regions and its people based on natural resources and their potential as labor resources (Adejumobi 2001:156). Moreover, loyalties and social networks – through political and ethnic relationships – were of importance in these processes (Schubert 2005:26).

Acholiland gradually became involved in the political structure laid out by the British colonists (Atkinson 2010:5). What is called Acholiland today includes seven administrative districts: Gulu, Pader, Kitgum, Agago, Amuru, Lamwo, and Nwoya[2] (Map 2). According to the 2014 National Population and Housing Census, Acholiland had a population of 1.47 million out of approximately 33 million Ugandans, with most of them (1.1 million) living in rural areas. Agriculture has been – and still is – the primary form of subsistence in Acholiland and includes the cultivation of different kinds of millet and peas, sesame (called *simsim*), sorghum, maize, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, cassava, and other leafy green vegetables. Huge mango trees often provide a central place to meet in their shadow, and oranges and avocado trees are also common. Acholi were, and still are, primarily farmers. Domestic animals, especially cattle, were few and did not seem to have the same importance for Acholi as for other Nilotic speakers of the region, like Nuer or Dinka (Atkinson 2010:56). As my interlocutors in this research explained, animals were especially important in times when a certain amount of cash was needed

[2] The oldest two districts are Kitgum and Gulu. Since 2001, five new districts have been formed through division: Pader District in 2001 (previously part of Kitgum District), Amuru District in 2006 (previously part of Gulu District), Lamwo District in 2010 (previously part of Kitgum District), Nyowa in 2010 (previously part of Amuru District), and Agago District in 2010 (previously part of Pader District).

quickly. Moreover, animals were necessary for paying a bride price, which always included a number of cows and goats.

Acholi regard themselves as a distinct ethnic group that, according to Atkinson (2010:75), was established no earlier than the late 17th century. At that time, village-lineages (today often called clans), upon which the economic, social, and ideological foundation was built, became organized into chiefdoms (ibid.:75, 77). Each village (*gang*) was named after the core lineage (*kaka*), and people were related to the core lineage through marriage. Friends, refugees, or war captives have been involved in the village constellation, and these groupings, according to Allan (1994:128–29), can be understood as close relatives. The social and political organization of Acholi is described as patrilineal descent, with decentralized and exogamous lineages (Girling 1960:18).

At the end of the 17th century, different villages were incorporated into new, larger polities of chiefdoms, which Atkinson attributes to insecurity brought about by drought and war (Atkinson 2010:78, 80). Of interest here is that the lineages did not disappear; instead, the new chiefs (*rwodi*) "recognized and even enhanced the position of the already established leadership within lineages" (ibid.:85). Lineages remained of importance as economic, social, and ideological foundations; had recognized rights to land (for both agriculture and hunting), and provided the setting for day-to-day activities (ibid.:76–77). These lineages, as this thesis will show, have continued to be central polities within Acholi society until the present day.

During British colonial times, Acholi identity and understanding as an ethnic group were fostered in contrast to other groups within the protectorate (ibid.:7). Indeed, the fixation of ethnic groups in colonial maps played a central role for the

introduction of the political system commonly referred to as indirect rule. Politically, a new structure was created in which people were grouped according to British definitions of language, political system, and cultural aspects.[3] Loosely based on the political system of the Kingdom of Buganda in the southern part of the protectorate, the colonists established a hierarchically organized administrative system with a central government located in the Kingdom of Buganda, as well as decentralized authorities of tribal organizations under the name of indirect rule (Mutibwa 2016:67).

This transition was marked by a newly created "council of chiefs," with a new "Paramount Chief" responsible for collecting taxes and organizing communal labor in Acholiland on a central level (Vorhölter 2014:83). Moreover, former independent chiefdoms were amalgamated and chiefs in office were controlled by the British administration (Atkinson 2010:5, 6). This transition from former diverse political structures and economic relations to the new British-directed system was not free from struggles over power and influence between individuals and social groups among the Acholi, as well as between the Acholi as a collective entity in competition with other tribes for scarce political and economic investments and opportunities (Atkinson 2010:7; Finnström 2008:40). Thus, the British established a new political example beyond the previous so-called "traditional" structures of Acholi.

To summarize, Acholi were not legally recognized as citizens, nor did they have competence for citizenship in the polity of the British Protectorate of Uganda. Within the colonial history of citizenship in Uganda, the term "citizenship" has been only used in regard to the polity of the British Protectorate. Despite economic

[3] Schubert used the term *ethnofunctionalism* in this context (Schubert 2005:31).

inclusion of Acholi in the British Protectorate, claiming legal rights within this polity was exclusively reserved for British persons. Acholi could make meaningful claims within the polities of lineage and chiefdoms – polities that have been denied the momentum of citizenship in dominant citizenship discussions thus far. Acholi struggle for participation and claims for the power to select their own political administration and representatives were their first steps in claiming political rights. At the beginning, these claims were locally focused and had little national intention.

Although Mamdani's analysis is an important contribution to the understanding of citizenship, his dichotomy between citizen and subject does not differentiate between citizenship as a political tool and as a theoretical concept. Mamdani's understanding of citizenship during colonial times draws on British colonial ideology in which differences were established between citizen and subject. On the one hand, he decontextualizes and unmasks citizenship as a political tool of Eurocentrism and racism, but at the same time, he carries on the authoritarian use of the term "citizenship" in his political analysis. This perspective on citizenship has led to limitations within political analysis, which today mainly focuses on the dichotomy between ethnic groups and national citizenship ideals.

2.2 Conflicts of competences for citizenship in independent Uganda

When Uganda finally achieved independence in October 1962, the tables turned – at least with regard to the formal status of citizenship in the polity of the state. According to Uganda's constitution of independence,

> "[E]very person who, having been born in Uganda is on 8th October 1962 a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies or a British protected person shall become a citizen of Uganda on 9th October 1962" (The Constitution of Uganda 1962, Chapter II: Citizenship).

Legal citizenship changed from being an exceptional status, accessible only for members of a foreign minority in power, to a status for "all." However, competences for citizenship, as I will show, were not the same for everyone.

The transition from a protectorate to an independent state also marked the introduction of a party system as the representative system in Uganda. The first parties were formed at the end of the protectorate, but it was challenging to establish a party that was not regarded as regionally, ethnically, or religiously biased. Another challenge was posed by the fact that the former colonial administration was regionally focused, while the new polity called for national politics.

In this new polity of the state, citizenship represented a political ideal and propagated democratization, detribalization, and modernization to overcome clientelistic structures and ethnicity, which were regarded as barriers to the abovementioned targets (Laruni 2015:214; Keller 2014). Moreover, former ethnic political structures that were regarded as important within the arguments for indirect rule were increasingly seen as hindrances to the democratization process, as well as to the establishment of a political system that would enable everyone to possess the same competence for citizenship according to legal rights.

Hope for democratization became greatly crushed. Powerful networks were maintained, deepened, and created along social, cultural, economic, and political lines competing for control over allocation of state patronage, contradicting the

democratic ideals of a nation-state (Laruni 2015:219, Keller 2014). Political solidarities remained important, and parties were constituted according to different groups of interest along regional, ethnic, or religious lines (Schubert 2005:37). Within the first 25 years of independence, Uganda was characterized by unstable national politics, together with alternating presidents and political solidarities, and increasing militarization. Since 1966, the military became an ever more integrative part of Ugandan politics (ibid.:148). Ethnicity once again became a widely used term; it played a major role in the manipulations of the military and post-colonial politics, which were driven by political calculations of privileged individuals and elite groups competing to gain or maintain political power and access to resources and wealth (Atkinson 2010:277).

During the British protectorate, economic and political inequalities arose in Uganda. Until recently, the perspective that Acholi became a place of war because of its unbalanced economic and political development, compared to other regions in Uganda, was supplemented by the argument that Acholi people were overrepresented within the military at the time of independence and thus presented a real danger for other ethnic groups and regions. Under the presidency of Obote I (1966–1971), Acholi still comprised the majority in the army. With the coup of Idi Amin 1971, Acholi were not only discharged from the military forces, but many thousands were killed (Branch 2011:57). In his second term of presidency (1980–1985), Obote brought many Acholi back into influential positions.

Despite legal recognition of Acholi as citizens of the state, competences for citizenship only seemed to be available for those who managed to have political and/or military power. Military force increasingly gained in importance in the

demarcation of power constellations and thus one's access to competences for citizenship. It also forcefully diminished one's rights – including the "right to live", as in the case of Acholi under Idi Amin (1971–1979). At the same time, one's individual legal status as a citizen did not promise access to opportunities and resources – legal rights were arbitrary in practice. While loyalties and social relationships played a crucial role in gaining competence for citizenship within the polity of the state, the polity of lineages was the most important for the day-to-day lives of Acholi – although they were yet again widely disregarded in citizenship discussions.

Amidst this situation of political, social, and economic insecurity, the coup of the National Resistance Army (NRA) in 1986 was promoted as a turn away from an unstable past and a shift in the direction of political stability, economic growth, and peace in Uganda. The NRA introduced Resistance Councils (RC) on the local level already during the guerilla war. Such RCs were established as a counter system to the governmental political administration (Schubert 2005:162). When Yoweri Museveni became president in 1986, he introduced the National Resistance Movement (NRM), extended the RC system to other regions in Uganda, and established what was claimed to be a new type of democracy as an important part of the movement. According to Oosterom (2011), under the movement system citizens could engage meaningfully with state institutions for the first time.

Moreover, the system was seen as an attempt to overcome sectarian and local ethnic politics in Uganda (Vorhölter 2014:91; Atkinson 2010:279). Idealized as a political system of "African tradition systems" (Crook 1999:114) and "principles of participatory democracy" (Makara et al. 2009:187), every adult was deemed to be a

member of the movement. At the same time, a restriction on party activities was introduced (ibid.:185). The national movement system was based on a principle of community-level, participatory, no-party democracy, with an idealized consensual character. The movement's ideology and the new political system were officially approved in the new constitution of 1995, as well as in the Movement Act 1997.

When the NRM rose to power in 1986, Museveni officially used the rhetoric of human rights in his 10-point program issued in the same year (Mutibwa 2016). In 1988, the Ugandan government established a constitutional commission, headed by Benjamin Odoki and thus known as the "Odoki Commission." The commission sought to make recommendations for a new constitution on the basis of input from Ugandan people across the country on what they thought should be included in the new constitution. Its overall aim was to examine the history of human rights and rights to equality (Mujuzi 2012:54). Moreover, Mujuzi (2012:55) described the strong influence of international human rights treaties ratified by Uganda in the establishment of the Ugandan constitution. This was also the case with regard to introducing and defining discrimination (Mujuzi 2012:55). People with disabilities became a new group increasingly regarded as experiencing discrimination.

Advocates argued that people with disabilities were marginalized and their special needs ignored, that they were seen as discriminated against in employment opportunities, and that their talents and contributions to the country were disregarded. The lack of institutionalized education for disabled people was also mentioned (Mujuzi 2012:60). According to Mujuzi, it is not clear who actually handed in the submissions regarding people with disabilities, but Ndeezi (2004) states that the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) took an

important role in advocating for people with disabilities and played a central role in including this category in the constitution of Uganda. In 1995, people with disabilities were mentioned in the constitution for the first time.

With the extension of the National Resistance Movement and its creation of decentralized political positions, competence for citizenship was given in a participatory approach on the local level. Since everyone was de facto part of the movement, the people elected for political positions were those who promised to have the best contacts and possibilities to obtain resources for local communities. Legally recognized citizens gained competence for citizenship, but for many, the possibility to make meaningful legal claims as an individual person was too expensive and the results unpredictable – people suspected corruption behind the system.

While for many parts of Uganda, the takeover by Museveni was described as a success and marked the end of violent conflict, this was not the case in other parts of the country, including Acholiland (Vorhölter 2014:93; Finnström 2008:72).[4] Moreover, although Museveni promised a new movement system, he fostered ethnic stereotypes at the same time. In this national rhetoric, Acholi became once again a symbol of war and danger. Behrend impressively describes the situation for Acholiland during that time:

> "Roadblocks regulated access; transport and trade collapsed almost completely around the end of 1987. As early as March 1987, the NRA forced large segments of the population in Gulu District to leave their farms and

[4] Approximately 27 different rebel groups were reported to be resisting the new government (Finnström 2008:69).

> take 'refuge' in camps or in the cities. […] By December 1987, some 33,000 refugees were living in various camps distributed throughout Gulu City. There was not enough to eat, sanitary conditions were inadequate, and, except in Lacor, medical care had more or less collapsed" (Behrend 1999:172).

Since Museveni's NRA behaved worse against Acholi population, it continually lost support among the populace in Acholiland. This, in turn, led the NRA soldiers to consider Acholi to be generally sympathetic to the rebels, and soldiers treated them with corresponding violence (Behrend 1999:173). The government declared the districts of Gulu and Kitgum war zones between 1986 and 2006. Acholiland was the site of brutal hostilities between the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)[5] and various militarized groups, of which the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) was not only the most well-known, but also the group that had committed the most terrible crimes against the population of Acholiland.

Acholiland thus became isolated from the rest of the country. Like other groups such as the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF), the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) was described as a military-structured organization, influenced by religious ideologies and spiritualism, with a political agenda including mobilization for the rights of the Acholi within the Ugandan state, the formation of an ethnically balanced army and judiciary, and equal education and health for all (Allen 2006:43; Finnström 2008:5; Wilhelm-Solomon 2011:20). The political participation and engagement of Acholi were challenged not only by a lack of knowledge and

[5] The National Resistance Army was renamed the Uganda People's Defence Force following the enactment of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda.

capacities, patronage, and interest due to insufficient state responsiveness, as was the case for other parts of the country, but were also hindered by fear and suspicion of the state and the public sphere (Oosterom 2011). Moreover, the political engagement of Acholi was dominated by security issues throughout the 1990s (Oosterom 2016:82).

Acholiland gained notoriety through the brutal acts of the LRA, which included violent ambushes and the kidnapping of thousands of children to become child soldiers. In 1996, the government of Uganda forced the population to move to protected villages and Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps, of which the largest, Pabbo, peaked at around 60,000 displaced people. According to the government, such camps were established to protect civilians, as well as to cut off further support (especially food) for the LRA. But in many camps, protection proved to be difficult, and camps became the new targets for ambushes by the LRA. Moreover, outbreaks of fire in the camps often destroyed everything (Finnström 2008). By the end of 2004, Gulu District alone had 53 officially recognized IDP camps (Muyinda 2008:40), and more then 90 percent of the population lived in IDP camps or towns (Branch 2013; Finnström 2008; Muyinda 2013).

Moreover, camp life became associated with a breakdown of Acholi culture, economic practices, political orders, social relations, norms, and values (Vorhölter 2014:22). Former institutions and ways of political engagement and participation were challenged and disrupted, and IDP camps in Acholiland were increasingly governed by the rules of humanitarian and military forces (Oosterom 2016:76, 83). According to Oosterom, this led to a situation in which citizenship (understood in

her work as political engagement with the state and in the public sphere) was limited.

In this situation of encampment, but also of relative isolation from the rest of the country and thus limited participation within the national polity, aid organizations offered new forms of accessing resources. However, with the increasing presence of humanitarian aid organizations in Acholiland, as well as religious-based networks and government-led development programs, new social networks were formed. These new networks, created along new formal interventions and categories, offered access to opportunities and resources; at the same time, they became important in the restructuring of social networks, productive relations, and obligations (Wilhelm-Solomon 2011:23). In other words, these new social networks offered a way to claim resources and opportunities as part of newly established polities of aid. At the same time, new group rights, such as those for people with disabilities, became an integral part of the constitution and were of major importance for people with disabilities in Acholiland.

2.3 The creation of a disability-centered polity: citizens and clients

The disability movement in Uganda can be regarded as setting a new polity in the Ugandan context that is well connected to ideas and practices of the Global North as well as conforming and even supportive to the NRM political system (see Chapter 6). Researchers, activists, and politicians frequently use the term "the disability movement" in a descriptive way, both in connection with an international disability movement and as part of society on the national level. Moreover, Ndeezi

(2004) has mentioned that the movement was created in strong collaboration with the National Resistance Movement in Uganda.

The prominent success story of people with disabilities in Uganda starts mainly with the creation of the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) in 1987 (Abimanyi-Ochom and Mannan 2014:2). NUDIPU was considered the new spearhead of the disability movement (ibid. 2014:2). The name *The Disability Movement* reflects and fits into international approaches used by disability activists and marks a shift from a medical to a social model of disability.

Constituting of, and taking inspiration from, the rights-based approaches, the disability movement was inspired by the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983–92), the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, and the United Nations Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Ndeezi 2004:17). With financial and technical support by the Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People (DSI) and Oxfam, NUDIPU started to decentralize its programs and founded district unions of people with disabilities. While the disability movement was, and often still is, regarded as a social movement, pointing to non-governmental political organized forms, this was explicitly not the case of the disability movement in Uganda. Instead, it was deeply connected or even rooted within the political system of the NRM.[6]

[6] It is unclear how much of the support for people with disabilities was also a result of the rising number of people with disabilities through the war and dictatorships, as well as the "bush war" of Museveni. What can be seen is that Museveni opened a rehabilitation center for soldiers with disabilities, a fact that is widely unknown and completely disregarded in the discussions of disability in Uganda (see more in Namatovu Mary Achilles (2014), *"Inlet without Outlet": The Rehabilitation Process of Soldiers with Disabilities (SWDS) in the Chieftancy of Mubende Rehabilitation Centre – Uganda People's Defence Forces (CMRC-UPDF)*, unpublished MA thesis.

The similarity in structure between NUDIPU and the National Resistance Movement is not accidental: the disability movement arose in strong collaboration with the National Resistance Movement (Ndeezi 2004:17). While on the one hand, NUDIPU is regarded as a DPO (Disabled Persons' Organization), an organization that requires membership, on the other, NUDIPU regarded itself as "the biggest social movement"[7] until at least 2006, when Uganda introduced a multi-party system, encompassing all people with disabilities in Uganda. As in the national movement approach, all people with disabilities were regarded as members (Ndeezi 2004:8). NUDIPU became known as *the* political representative for *all* people with disabilities in Uganda. NUDIPU positioned people with disabilities as a new marginalized, vulnerable group, promoting them as isolated, neglected, and deprived of social services (Mugeere et al. 2015). The group attracted central attention in the politics of the new national movement system, which, according to Ndeezi, eventually helped them to become integrated. In Uganda, *deaf citizenship* as part of this new politics of recognition was described as a success story (Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck 2015; Lang and Murangira 2009).

Moreover, NUDIPU's deep entanglement with the political system in Uganda came to the fore when the electoral commissions used the decentralized structure of NUDIPU (Ndeezi 2004:18). Like the constitution and the Movement Act, NUDIPU did not differentiate between the state of Uganda and the movement as an organization separate from the state (Makara et al. 2009:187), nor did it differentiate between the organization and the representatives of people with

[7] Personal talk with Edson Ngirabakunsi, executive director of NUDIPU, 2016.

disabilities in the local council system (Ndeezi 2004). Ndeezi, who became the first deaf member of parliament, was also the director of NUDIPU at the time.

The Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD), which had been established in 1973 as an umbrella organization, became one of the 17 founding organizations of NUDIPU. Its structure resembles the structure of NUDIPU and follows the movement: according to UNAD, it covers the whole of Uganda with today's seven regional Deaf Associations.[8]

The success story of deaf people in Uganda is certainly part of the disability movement, but it has its own nationally specific aspects. As one of the marginalized groups in Uganda, it was formed by deaf people targeting language-centered socio-political activities, participative political processes, and the recognition of deaf persons in national constitutions, as well as in the human rights agenda on the international level (Haualand and Allan 2009; Cooper and Rashid 2015).

With the new constitution in Uganda, people with disabilities were constitutionally recognized for the first time; groups of and for people with disabilities arose as new actors of citizenship in strong collaboration with, and support of, organizations and governments from the Global North. Relationships with external donors provided access to opportunities for funding, and UNAD and other DPOs became increasingly involved in service provisions for people with disabilities. A new disability-centered polity was established, setting criteria of inclusion for people with disabilities. While the ideology of the disability movement focused on the creation of opportunities for people with disabilities and access to

[8] http://unadeaf.org/who-we-are/regional-deaf-associations, accessed March 29, 2017.

resources, the qualifications and selections in the creation of such opportunities and resources were set by approaches both from the national movement and through the motions of external donors.

Recognition – for one to be recognized as a person with a disability and thus have the possibility to become included into the new polity – was first of all a bodily issue (of hearing, seeing, walking, etc.), despite the official changes made to the definition of disability and the data collection.[9] These new disability-related polity was not free of struggle and was characterized by hierarchical relationships. Competences for citizenship – for one to have the possibility of making meaningful claims within the polity of the state – became deeply connected to the criteria and categories of various international aid organizations, as well as important political relationships and loyalties within the national movement. The efforts of people with disabilities to receive some of these new resources can be better described with the term "clientship" than citizenship. Clientship involves a "hierarchical relation between the individual (client) and the program (patron)" (Meinert et al. 2009:205). Most people with disabilities did not have the competence to make meaningful claims within the new disability- or deaf-related polities, but claimed to be clients

[9] The First World Report on Disability estimates that over one billion people (about 15%) experience at least one form of disability worldwide, with the highest rates in African countries (WHO/World Bank 2011:29–30). Census data from Uganda show an increase from 1.1% in 1991 (Uganda – Population and Housing Census), over 3.5% in 2002 (Ugandan Population and Household Census), and 7% in the 2005/2006 Uganda National Household Survey to higher rates of 20% in the 2006 Demographic and Health Survey, 16% in the 2009/10 Uganda National Household Survey and 19% in the 2011 Demographic and Health Survey. This increase has been explained by changing understandings of disability (from physical characteristics to functional disabilities) and adapted methods of data collection, especially the change to the Washington Group survey. Numbers concerning hearing difficulties were between 5.4% and 5.6%. The recent National Population and Housing Census (2014) noted a prevalence rate of 12.4% for ages 2 years and above and 14% for ages 5 and above.

instead, thus fitting into the categories of the organizations setting up services and resources.

To summarize, citizenship has mainly been associated with the state polity. This picture of citizenship reflects the dominance of political and legal studies in which citizenship was inevitably connected to the evolution of a (nation-)state (Adejumobi 2001). In this idealized construct, citizenship was deemed to take shape in the relationship between the state and its individual citizens. In this brief overview, I have shown that despite being legally recognized as citizens, many Acholi did not have competences for citizenship. Moreover, other polities, important in the day-to-day lives of Acholi, have never been regarded in the context of citizenship despite their importance.

In the following chapters, I will bring to the fore different polities and changes important for deaf people in (re)creating competence for citizenship. Questions about how deaf people understand, experience, and practice citizenship and how they gain competence for citizenship in different parts of the world have received scant attention in scientific debates.[10] With regard to Uganda, as is the case for many other sub-Saharan African countries, this shift of citizenship – from a political tool to a theoretical concept – has only come about slowly.

[10] Ethnographic analysis has especially contributed to this debate; see, for example, Kusters (2015) and Friedner (2011).

2.4 First encounters: entering the field of post-war Acholiland

The Deaf Union Gulu occupied a single room next to other offices – for the blind, the physically disabled, women with disabilities, and landmine survivors – scattered across different buildings on a spacious compound in Pece, a quarter in Gulu Town. The compound is often called GAPWD, short for Gulu Association for Persons with Disabilities, which refers to the umbrella DPO representing all people with disabilities.

Upon entering the compound for the first time, I was presented with a general picture of people with disabilities – neglected by their families, isolated and oppressed. The walls of the offices featured posters advocating for people with disabilities and for human rights. That was in July 2009, three years after the war between the LRA and the government forces was officially declared over. Signposts for hundreds of organizations in town reflected a post-war time. Most of the roads were not tarred, and cars and trucks from the UN and international NGOs sped through the streets, leaving behind clouds of dust. Walking in Gulu, especially crossing roads, required care, and people often had to jump aside. The right to drive belonged to the biggest car or truck on the road – a situation regarded as even more dangerous for blind, deaf, and deaf-blind people, but also for people with mobility disabilities.

Gulu was a popular place: the humanitarian aid industry attracted people with higher education from other parts of the country, international "experts" working for NGOs, and researchers; "post-war tourism," which included visiting former locations of IDP camps and sites of violence, had begun to grow in popularity.

The central market in town consisted of stalls rich with vegetables, fruit, fish, and meat as well as secondhand clothes and tools, surrounded by tailors, hairdressers, and small shops selling durable goods. Every morning, trucks stopped in front of my hotel near the market, loading food for southern Sudan.[11] In the evenings, along the market roads, street vendors sold food, and pork joints offered skewers. Loud music from many of the bars, restaurants, and recently opened clubs could be heard everywhere in town.

Although the lifestyle in Gulu was seen as a modern and good way of life, it was also associated with a collapse of Acholi culture and considered a place of less morality and, increasingly, Western traditions. "The war destroyed much of the traditional culture of Acholi," one driver explained to me on a longer drive, "but the Americans are doing the rest."

This was also the time of resettlement: landmines had been cleared, and people were preparing to go back home to their family compounds. For many, returning home was associated with re-entering a life of traditions – but many traditions needed to be learned again. Caritas, an international aid organization, published a book about Acholi culture (Harlacher et al. 2006). Cultural aspects became increasingly connected with norms and values, agriculture, questions about the inheritance of land, justice, and rituals.

When I visited former camps, most of the people had left already, leaving behind a round, empty space on which their former hut had been built. Those staying behind had a great deal of work ahead to cultivate the bushland and build

[11] South Sudan gained independence from the Republic of the Sudan in 2011.

new homes for their families. Others came to Gulu to look for a job, study at the newly established Gulu University, attend secondary school, and – for deaf people – join the sociality of other deaf people in town.

The town of Gulu became the destination for my fieldwork. Here, the disability movement had established the headquarters for Acholiland; units for deaf children at two different schools had been established; and the deaf community was growing in town as well as in the surrounding villages.

2.5 Sources of data and methods used

The amount of articles and books published on the region of Acholiland quickly increased in number. Many of them focused on the war and post-war situation, largely disregarding people with disabilities. I used these books and articles to compare and analyze the situations and events of deaf people. Other important articles I used came from publications about and from the disability movement. Most of the scholarly articles did not focus on Acholiland, and only a few could be found in the NUDIPU archive; similarly, field notes and monographs about Acholi did not mention deaf people. Therefore, most of my material comes from interviews with and narrations of deaf people.

Since my first visit to Gulu from July to August 2009, I returned to the region between January and August of 2010, then again from December 2010 to January 2011, and moved with my family to Kampala, the capital of Uganda, in June 2012 (until January 2017), with regular visits to Acholiland. My first stay in July and August 2009 was basically used to concretize both a region and a topic for my PhD

research. I started to learn Ugandan Sign Language and became fascinated by it. During this first visit, the idea occurred to me to follow the transitions of deaf people's lives.

In the beginning, I used questionnaires and started to visit deaf people in their homes. Many questions were so-called "open questions," while others served to collect data about family status, history of movements, and questions around deafness and sign language. The content of the answers gave me further possibilities to ask and deepen my understanding of various topics related to deafness in this transition. Although these became helpful at a later stage when comparing experiences and answers, I realized that my interlocutors were more interested in telling other stories of their lives. Particularly during my first stay, many deaf people told me about the war and time of encampment. I changed my methods, stopped using questionnaires, and started to talk to people more informally at the Gulu Association for Persons with Disabilities, at schools, and at their homes or workplaces. These talks were part of a method that is usually called "participant observation." During my visits to deaf people's homes, schools, workplaces, or at gatherings on the compound of the Gulu Association for Persons with Disabilities, conversations always took place. These "conversations in context" often revealed fruitful information about the lives and social relationships of my interlocutors and stood in contrast to interviews guided more by the occasion taking place.

On most of my visits, I was accompanied by an interpreter. In the beginning, my intention was to work with two interpreters – one woman and one man – for a better opportunity to talk about gender-based topics, but I could not find a female interpreter well connected to, and accepted in, the deaf community. Therefore, I

most often worked with Charles. Although Charles was often busy, since he would translate whenever an event in Gulu needed sign language interpretation, he was well connected to deaf people in Gulu; as a person with mobility disabilities, he was also politically connected to the disability movement. Sometimes I worked with Monica, one of the teachers for deaf children at the governmental school, but she had only limited time to help me. Especially at the beginning of my work with interpreters, I noticed that they sometimes stopped translating, translated something different, or started to explain what the deaf person had said. The translator often foregrounded the presentation of deaf people and/or people with disabilities as people in need. Only in later interviews was I able to ask more specific questions and had the feeling that the translation went in another direction.

I could communicate in Ugandan Sign Language with many of the participants in this study, but sometimes the help of another deaf person was helpful when talking to people who had not learned Ugandan Sign Language or only possessed a basic level of knowledge, using what were called "local signs" instead. In the event that no interpreter was around, I either signed myself as best I could, or I wrote things down. I realized that for some people, signing was much easier than for others, and some deaf people started to translate for me when speaking with other deaf people as well.

While in the beginning, the interpreter sometimes tried to explain a deaf person's background and situation to me, these became more adequately translated after I explained why it was important to know how deaf people think, talk, and feel about their lives. Many of the questions I asked, especially in the beginning, must

have seemed strange, because the answers seemed obvious to everyone. My outsider status helped me to ask unusual things.

I built especially close relationships with four families, all of whom were staying in or around the town of Gulu. Although some deaf people lived close to each other, I sometimes traveled at least 20 km to reach families. Often when I visited homes, other family members were around. As we sat inside one of the houses or huts or in the shadow of a tree, family members participated in the interviews and often started to explain on behalf of the deaf person. This also gave me important insights into the relationships between family members through their perspectives and sometimes contradictory feelings and narrations.

I started my first Ugandan Sign Language lessons in Gulu in a class with around six other hearing people, but for my longer stay, I wanted to learn more. Deaf people suggested that I visit one of the deaf school sections in Gulu. And so I did: every morning I went to school and sat together with the children, watching the teacher, following the lessons, the questions and answers. While I definitely learned a lot during the classes – not only sign language, but also interesting insights into social relations, teaching practices, and the creation of signs – I also realized how difficult the environment was for teaching and learning. The classrooms consisted of one large shared room, separated by mats. Because I could hear the other classrooms as well, I sometimes found the noise very confusing, but at some points it helped me not to fall asleep – the individual classroom units were otherwise relatively dark, and the small windows did not let enough sun inside. The pupils' chairs all faced the teacher, which made it difficult to see the questions and answers of classmates.

Taking part in my research was voluntary, and I did not pay a specific amount for an interview. During the time I was there, I built relationships that involved financial and material help and support. What changed my relationships, especially to women, was that I became a mother during my years of research, and my children sometimes joined the interviews as well. My children became the best door-openers, albeit unwillingly. Particular topics related to motherhood, such as breastfeeding, food for children, sickness, etc., of which I had no idea before, created common themes and relationships.

The data from this first time of my dissertation process consisted of some quantitative material, but mostly it was qualitative. When I introduced myself, I never used the term "data." Instead, I used the sign for "research," in Ugandan Sign Language iconically "opening the surface to look under." I have always presented myself as a researcher interested in learning more about the lives of deaf people. I asked many times about how deaf people experienced specific situations, and I asked if they might remember stories they would like to share with me.

When I started to work with the data I had collected, an event happened that changed my approach completely: my laptop got stolen and I had no backups for any of the research I had done so far. This loss of most of my interviews and records took place in December 2013, forcing me to start anew. Although from today's perspective it had many advantages, I was definitely not thinking like that in 2013. My ensuing methodology initially consisted of remembering old data, or relevant aspects thereof. I had videotaped some, although not all, of the interviews, and I still had a few interview transcriptions and very few handwritten notes, as well as printed overviews of terms and structures, family networks, and records of

meetings – but most importantly, I had the friendship and support of my interlocutors.

Coming back to Gulu and telling them my story, I experienced enormous support: many people asked directly how they could help, what kind of information I needed, or even what kinds of stories they could tell. The methods in this phase of research were based on open talk and narration. At the same time, a primary storyline, based on recalling old data, came to the fore and I started to ask topic-related questions. Additionally, to gain new information, such field trips helped me a lot in remembering older statements and conversations I had been involved in.

Beginning in June 2012, I lived in Kampala with my family and coordinated a research project called Disability & Technology between Makerere University and the University of Zurich. To have the possibility to stay in Uganda for such a long time and to become part of institutional networks, as well as disability-related political discussions, changed my perspective. The exchange with colleagues and team members, the ability to present my first research results, invitations to other dissemination workshops, and access to discussions all helped me to understand and integrate my discussions in a wider context. Furthermore, they gave me important insights into political aspects, processes of claim-making, and the "who's who" of the Ugandan disability landscape.

As mentioned above, I used different methods and changed them according to context and situation, which was also due to the focus of my interest. Setting my focus on competence for citizenship arose out of the many narrations of and encounters with deaf people in situations of everyday life, in which questions of access to financial resources, health services, and education guided their lives in

many ways. In negotiation with relatives, friends, or organizations, the importance of relationships became evident above all. My focus on finding a story that most of my interlocutors shared in the transitions from war to post-war was not the central point in weaving this narration together. Instead, the manifold relationships as sites to gain competence for citizenship are what became the starting point of this analysis.


ART WORK by AMOS
Z. Amos

Childhood Memories

James lost his hearing at the age of five following a bout of meningitis. His mother guided him to the hospital and to an *ajwaka*[33] for treatment, but nothing worked and he became deaf. Due to this, he faced difficulties, especially during the time of war. Locating the direction of the fighting that would take place during attacks by the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) was one of his challenges – at night, when his visual perception was limited due to darkness, sound became even more important as a warning and navigation system. However, James could lean on family members and neighbors to alert and support him in case of attacks.

"Come, rebels are there," people tried to make him understand using local signs.

"Where? Far or near?"

"No, they are near, close to the water pump."[34]

"Sometimes," James explained, "people tried to call me, but I could not hear them. Then they threw a stone to get my attention: 'You come, you come, the rebels are there,'"[35] they explained with local signs. He had to flee many times with his family to hide in the tall grass that grew near the villages. One night, as they were running away, he bumped into something and his leg was terribly injured. He could not walk anymore, but he was glad to be carried.

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[33] An *ajwaka* is a traditional healer.
[34] Interview with James, Lacor, April 7, 2015.
[35] Interview with James, Lacor, April 7, 2015.

James not only described his childhood in relation to the war, but also told me many other stories about his childhood: about striving to attend school, life in the villages, his religious experiences, adventures with his first deaf friend. He loved staying in the village, and he described his childhood overall as a happy one. His family, neighbors, and other people in the community worked together cooperatively, and James helped to plant crops, fished in the nearby river, and especially loved to hunt. Sometimes, when people pointed him out as a deaf person, he got very annoyed. "It was like they were insulting me,"[36] James explained to me. But in these cases, he said proudly, his older brother was always on the spot to protect him.

At one point during the 1980s, when James was about five years old, he and his family were forced to flee from their land in Arua, a district in the West Nile region of Uganda, due to an increase in violent attacks. From Arua they moved to Adjumani District, then to different places in Acholiland, always looking for a secure place to stay, land to cultivate, and possibilities to make a living.

When the family moved again, this time it was to Abuga, which at that time was one of the Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps close to the town of Lacor. In Abuga, James met another deaf person, a child, for the first time in his life – Paul. He remembered his first meeting with Paul: "I looked at Paul with disbelief and kept quiet. I thought I was the only one who can not hear."[37] Ojok thought that Paul wanted to make jokes about him, and he felt insulted and became very angry. But after he realized

[36] Interview with James, Lacor, April 7, 2015.
[37] Interview with James, Lacor, April 7, 2015.

that the other boy was deaf too, they started to share and exchange food and drinks, played together, and became friends.

During James' childhood, education was difficult for many children due to the conflict. Teachers left the region, schools closed due to insecurity, and the way to school – as well as the school itself – became unsafe.

Attending school was one of James' biggest wishes, he remembered, but also one of his biggest challenges. "There is no school for the deaf,"[38] his mother explained to him. But James wasn't willing to give up. He wanted to go to school like his siblings, nephews, nieces, and other children in his neighborhood. His uncle finally supported him, and James started at the nearby primary school as the only deaf pupil in his class.

Following the teacher was very difficult, he recalled, and at home his uncle helped him after school: He explained how to count, describing numbers and letters. Together, they communicated with signs, voices, and lip reading, with facial expressions and bodily gestures. James remembered how his mother took time to practice lip reading and speech training with him: "She let me know when the voice was right or wrong."[39] Together with his mother and sister, he practiced his pronunciation; James explained that one of his brothers was especially close to him and would patiently slow down his own speaking. That was all before he learned Ugandan Sign Language. Like Joyce, James recalled his childhood, particularly his relationship with close relatives, in very caring and loving terms. After James had been at the primary school for

[38] Interview with James, Lacor, April 7, 2015.
[39] Interview with James, Lacor, April 7, 2015.

two years, the fighting between the LRA and Ugandan government forces came closer and led to the school's closure. Like the rest of the children, he stayed at home.

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3 Deaf Children's Competences for Citizenship

I have stopped recounting James' description of his childhood memories at the point before he learned UgSL and created deaf-related social and institutional relationships. James finished his primary school in a school for children with disabilities. After being educated as a carpenter, he was offered the possibility to join a Bible education and translation project based in Kenya. Today, he lives with his mother, sister, and other relatives in the town of Lacor in Acholiland, and like many other people, he is looking for opportunities to gain income so as to contribute and take over family responsibilities.

In this chapter, I will examine the childhood memories of deaf people in order to better understand their childhood experiences and their possibilities to make meaningful claims in their day-to-day lives. With a focus on the qualities of social relationships emotionally remembered by deaf people, I argue that deaf children's competences for citizenship are distributed foremost in the social relational field of "loving relationships," especially with kin. After providing brief theoretical insight into discussions of deaf children's citizenship, I will discuss the distributed competences of children's social relational fields. In the next section, I will show how caring relationships are important in constituting competence for citizenship. Within these instances of caring relations, I stress the theme of communication, which I found central to many of the childhood memories I came to know.

This chapter focuses on the time before Ugandan Sign Language was introduced and before deaf-related social networks were created. For some of my

interlocutors, this time was associated with a time "without language," "without knowledge," or "without rights." Instead of chronological periods of pre-war, war, and post-war society, in deaf people's narrations the acquirement of Ugandan Sign Language, in connection with building social relationships with other deaf people, was a pivotal turning point and therefore constitutes the "pre" and "post." For some people, this point was reached in old age, while others experienced it during their childhood. This chapter brings to the fore childhood memories in which Ugandan Sign Language had not yet been learned.

My interlocutors' childhood experiences were communicated in very different contexts and forms: in some instances, such as in James' case, I asked them to tell me more about their childhood. With others, childhood narratives appeared in different conversations, used to make an example or underline a special statement. In yet other instances, people felt uncomfortable talking about their childhood altogether.

My intention is not to write or better shape a consistent story about "*the* deaf children without language." Rather, I hope to capture the way people perceive – the way "they remember, forget and reinterpret their own pasts" (Berliner 2005:200) – a past that includes very different modes of communication. In doing so, I selected aspects of narrations I evaluated as important in regard to citizenship and analyzed them with a focus on the concept of competences for citizenship.

This chapter offers counter-narratives in three different ways. First, it is a counter-narrative to representations that largely portray deaf people – as part of the wider group of people with disabilities – as oppressed and neglected agents due to beliefs, norms, or values of their surrounding societies; as the "poorest of the poor"

and the "least empowered of the least empowered" (Penna 2015:187). In these portrayals, deaf people face limited opportunities *due* to their deafness. However, I will show that the opportunities of deaf people are based in the quality of their social relationships. Second, this chapter serves as a counter-narrative to works presuming that deaf children experience their childhood as *deaf* children. My interlocutors understood themselves, amongst other kinds of belonging, as deaf people *today*, which was not the case before the introduction of Ugandan Sign Language and the establishment of sign language-related social networks. And third, contrary to citizenship approaches – in which the individual child builds a focus that needs to be equipped with knowledge and skills so as to become a citizen in the future – I will show that deaf children's competences for citizenship were not only based in individual abilities. Instead, meaningful claims were made in relation to and in comparison with other social agents. Against this background, oppression will be conceptualized not as an isolated status following physical deafness and barriers to communication, but as a result of the quantity and quality of meaningful social relationships.

3.1 Citizens in the making: perspectives from the Global North

Writing about children's competence for citizenship once again poses the question of conceptualizing citizenship. How are children's competences for citizenship understood within different citizenship approaches? Do children have competences for citizenship? And if so, to what extent? T.H. Marshall (1950) gave us one possible answer to these questions. In his most influential developmental theory of

citizenship, with its main components of political, civil, and social rights, children have no political rights; following that, they cannot fully participate as citizens in the polity of the (nation-)state. Children in the context of Marshall's analysis were not regarded as "full citizens," but instead as "adults in waiting" (Thomas 2012:458).

In most social and political theories until the 1980s, childhood was mainly understood as a timespan during which it is important to acquire abilities in order to be equipped and capable of performing the requirements of a citizen in the future. Children were regarded as lacking wisdom and were not seen as rational beings; they needed to be looked after (Roche 1999:476). We can also say that children were regarded as "not yet competent" (Jenkins 1998) for citizenship in the dominant polity of the state.

This perspective had far-reaching consequences, especially in the countries of the Global North, regarding efforts to establish educational institutions. As Evans (1995:14) asserted in the case of Britain, citizenship re-entered educational debates with renewed force when a new concept of citizenship (in this case, "active citizenship") was introduced. This perspective raised questions about the best possible (institutionalized) ways to equip a child for his or her future responsibility as a citizen (Smiley 1995). Citizenship, as Evans wrote, was thought of as a process in which children managed their own transitions to adulthood (Evans 1995:15). Competence for citizenship in these approaches meant learning to function and act as a citizen in the future and was formally defined and equally set for everyone in a (nation-)state.

This perspective raised further important questions: what kinds of knowledge, skills, or abilities were regarded as important in order to become a

citizen in this polity? And what about those members of society who were deemed incompetent according to the set ideas? The circumstances of children, as well as of people with profound and complex learning difficulties and disabilities, raised questions about exclusion and inclusion (Vorhaus 2005:461). For a long time, deaf children in European countries were considered unable to become competent citizens due to their supposed lack of language skills, which was seen as a lack of intellectual capacities. In 18th-century France, the focus on education of those considered to lack intellectual capacities and the creation of special institutions was not borne out of charity, but belonged to the wider values of the Age of Enlightenment (Stiker 1997:109). The aim of this focus on education was to provide these people entry to "the common cultural and social heritage of their fellow citizens" (Stiker 1997:107).

The controversial debates – especially in Europe – about the best possible way for deaf children to communicate must be considered against this background of offering institutional settings for deaf children with the aim of supporting their mental, emotional, social, and psychological development in the best possible way so as to become full citizens in the future. Which language – spoken or signed – would best support a child's development? In countries of the Global North, these discussions resulted in increasing institutionalization in the fields of education, healthcare, and therapeutic practices (Lane et al. 1996:35). The acquisition of a language, either signed or spoken, was regarded as a requirement to develop cognitive abilities. The so-called "home signs" many deaf children develop when growing up in a hearing environment have been disregarded for a long time as a means of communication (Padden and Humphries 1988:30).

This brief insight into ideas of deaf children's competences for citizenship in the Global North shows that the making of a citizen is an ideological process shaped by the definition of citizenship over time, as well as by educational approaches. Furthermore, in this ideology, the discourse about children's rights and citizenship is dominated by a certain construction of childhood, understood foremost as a care-receiving phase of life (Abebe 2013:72). In this ideology, state-based institutions, especially those related to education, serve to support children's development in regard to becoming a full citizen in the future. Thus, rights for children become increasingly connected to the establishment of age-segregated child institutions (James 2011:170). From a state-related conceptualization, children's citizenship is regarded as limited, and children are foremost passive recipients of care.

Since the 1980s, childhood and disability have been reconceptualized and reframed (Nind et al. 2010:654). Within this paradigm shift, disability, including deafness, came to be understood as an interaction between an individual person and the environment. People, as the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) has stated, are disabled by social and bodily factors, but at the same time these factors open up space for individual agencies (Nind et al. 2010:654). With a new paradigm of childhood that has increasingly viewed children as free agents, decision-makers, and active participants in society, on the one hand, and the new paradigm of disability and deafness, on the other, the problems encountered in a disabled childhood have arisen in and through the social relationships children are part of and act in. These new approaches have opened up new possibilities to analyze how deaf children gained competence for citizenship.

As I have shown, in countries of the Global North, a state-related understanding of citizenship has dominated debates and approaches, and different forms of institutions have strongly guided the child and the caretaker. However, in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Uganda, such institutionalization is very limited. For most people in Acholiland, therapeutic institutions, medical treatment, hearing aids, and access to or knowledge about sign languages and schools for deaf children either did not exist or were out of reach for most children. Therapeutic care was neither known about nor available. In the experiences of my interlocutors, medical treatment only played a role in acute situations of sickness that caused deafness; it was never subsequently mentioned. Most importantly, the category of deaf people and a jointly practiced language was non-existent in most of my interlocutors' childhoods. The state was not central to deaf children's competence for citizenship; rather, their social relationships with family, friends, and neighbors played the most important role.

3.2 Distributed competences for citizenship in the polity of kin

Within today's political arguments, deaf people regard themselves as part of the disability movement in Uganda. People with disabilities in Uganda represent themselves politically as one marginalized and vulnerable group (Mugeere et al. 2015). But what we actually know about the lives of people with disabilities in Uganda is very limited. More research is needed to better understand their lives.

Searching for information in old ethnographies about Acholi, the term "disability" had not yet been introduced at the time they were written. Instead,

"abnormalities,"[1] epilepsy, leprosy, "madness," and "imbeciles" were mentioned as being caused by the spirit *jok*[2] (Girling 1960:160). Such descriptions fell under the headline of "disease" and were mentioned in relation to religious ideas and practices. F.K. Girling, a British anthropologist who did his fieldwork in Acholiland during a period of ten months in 1949–50 when it was still part of the British protectorate, did not mention deafness or deaf people once in his ethnography. This is in line with the analysis of Neubert and Cloerkes (2001[1987]), who analyzed and compared the understanding of disability in 24 different cultural groups worldwide. They found that deafness was mentioned very seldom in the ethnographic texts they analyzed; if so, it was connected to "stupidity" (Neubert and Cloerkes 2001:41). In the case of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Miles concludes in her historical overview that "deaf and hearing impaired people did occupy social space across Africa in earlier centuries, living lives like everyone else and also having some different experiences" (Miles 2004:543). Despite the differences in each scholar's perspective and focus, it is evident that deaf people barely played a role within ethnographic studies.

We can find examples in which deaf people or people with disabilities were described as stigmatized, excluded, or stupid. I cannot say that such expressions or practices did not exist; indeed, I met people in Acholiland who told me that deaf people are called *lababa* or *obange* – both words for "stupid." But this seemed to be only one perspective and did not cover the manifold experiences of deaf people.

[1] Girling mentions the following "abnormalities": monstrous birth, twins, harelips, polydactylism,

[2] *Jok* (pl. *jogi*) is a category of spirits and can be translated as "spirit, force, or power" (Behrend 1995:106). According to Behrend (1995:15), different *jogi* can be differentiated (*jogi* of the chiefdoms and the clans; free *jogi*; and *jogi* connected to witchcraft). Notably, *jogi* can do harm as well as heal. According to Behrend, deaf spirits existed as well (1995:101).

Moreover, in foregrounding such statements, a picture of African societies as undeveloped and primitive continues to be produced.

Deaf people, including deaf children, were not all treated in the same way depending on such stereotypes. James' case showed that often, there was more than one fixed opinion about – and practice with – deaf children. In different social relationships and situations, James experienced various kinds of support: he required support not only to attend school in the physical sense, but also to be able to follow the content of the lessons and perform the expected tasks. James' uncle was of particular importance in helping him to practice his exercises. Moreover, his mother, sisters, and one of his brothers were extremely helpful to him over the years in very different instances and during different times. James' school – and the willingness of his teacher to accept deaf children – was another challenge altogether. Thus, the polity of kin offers much more than a fixed role for deaf people.

In Uganda, kin relationships are significant in almost all aspects of life; as I analyzed in Chapter 2, they constitute one of the oldest polities for Acholi. In a structural approach, Girling (1960) described kin relationships as social and spatial units. Girling, who was interested in the social and political institutions of Acholi between 1860 and 1899, described the household as the smallest social unit structuring Acholi society. According to him, the household can be seen as maintaining a separate economic existence, with gender-based responsibilities. Solidarity – in order to share and help each other, as well as to take responsibility for one another – is a central element of these structures and often a prerequisite in defining them. The second bigger unit according to Girling was the hamlet, followed by the village, the domain, and finally Acholiland (ibid.). For my

interlocutors, the household and the village were the units of most importance in their day-to-day lives. A village was associated with a lineage (*kaka*) described as agnatic by Girling (1960:55).

In Acholiland today, lineages are usually called clans. When I asked deaf people about their clans, they were mainly unknown; many did not know the term "clan." Nevertheless, all could describe the relationships of people within their villages, and with some I was able to draw extended kin networks of their village and beyond. The lineage is the major instance of polity in which rights to land are transmitted and claimed, an issue which became most prominent after the war during the resettlement process (see Chapter 5).

Lineages, understood as kin, were not based on blood alone: many were integrated through marriage, but friends, refugees, or war captives also became included – as was the case for Joyce's father, mentioned in the Prologue. Within kinship studies, the narrow definition of kinship has been replaced by an important paradigm: kinship is not pre-existing, but has to be established; blood relationships are only one kind of association (Carsten 2004). Kinship can be better understood as a network than a predefined group or social unit. Kin relationships were (re)created, and although Girling described their socio-political institutions as spatial units, today such relationships no longer are limited to Acholiland. All families in this study had relatives in other parts of the country, and some relatives lived abroad in the UK.

Children became involved in the polity of kin and felt part of it through practices that created relationships. These practices included taking over responsibilities, but also feeling recognized and acknowledged. Thus, kinship was

recreated through practice. With regard to children, the ethnographic material for Acholi is very limited. Aside from records of birth ceremonies and name procedures, children don't play a role within Girling's monograph. In the few insights he provides, children are mainly described joining the work of people living in the household: girls assisted their mothers and other female family members in domestic tasks, which were considered important to affirm relationships and set up their own households (Girling 1960:21). They also acted as care receivers and held a special caregiver role, called *lapidi* (ibid.:23). Girling presents a picture of households in which responsibilities for their maintenance, as well as possibilities and requirements for constituting a new household, were connected to roles based on gender differentiation, age, and descent. Household tasks were distributed; different household members contributed to the household in different ways according to their roles, which were based on shared knowledge of expectations and responsibilities.

This perspective highlights that deaf people in Acholiland don't have a given position per se – their position is created in the social relational field. Neither society nor culture guides the practices of stigmatization, but social relations might offer various opportunities as well as limitations, as can be seen in the case of James. Furthermore, such an approach does not place deaf children outside of the family, but rather within it, with their own ties and relationships. Instead of simplifying the complex relationships in which deaf children were involved and seeing them only as excluded, oppressed, or stigmatized – or on the contrary, according to Miles, as included – a deeper analysis of social relationships helps us to bring into focus the

quantities and qualities of meaningful relationships and, thus, how we can understand deaf children's competence for citizenship.

To be able to access education, for example, competence for citizenship includes the establishment of meaningful social relationships. Children's competence for citizenship is not independently experienced, but instead inseparable from social relationships; their competence can be better understood as based in distributed competences of their social relational field. James' competence to claim "rights" was based in the interdependence of social relationships, primarily those of kin. As a child he did not know about his legally set rights, nor could he claim separate rights in another polity; thus, he made his claims in comparison with his siblings and other children in his village – in the polity of kin.

Abebe (2013:86) has mentioned the same important aspects in his work. Equality regarding deaf children is established in comparison with other children and experienced through social connections described in emotional terms as "loving relationships." To claim equality in this sense, deaf children are not only passive recipients of care, like Bat-Chava (2000) argues, but equality is also created through social relationships in comparison with one's environment.

To summarize, I have shown that (deaf) children's competences for citizenship are distributed in the polity of kin. The polity of kin is constituted not along fixed socio-political and spatial units, but instead recreated through practices in which expectations and responsibilities, as well as recognition and acknowledgement, are of importance. For deaf children, the polity of kin offers loving relationships that are of importance to gain competence for citizenship. Not everyone becomes part of this polity in the same way. Instead, as the next section

will show, the process is more flexible; it is less a question about inclusion or exclusion in this polity than a question about the quality of social relationships.

3.3 Qualities of caring relationships

Within his childhood memories, James refers to himself in relation to relatives, friends, and neighbors. Both everyday occurrences and special incidents within these relationships were often expressed in affective terms of feeling loved, liked, and supported, but were also experienced as feeling oppressed or outcast.

Emotions give us insights into the qualities of social relations and at the same time constitute sociality; according to John Dewey's action-theoretical conception of human emotions, they do not express an inner status, but appear in dependency of actions (Honneth 1995:136). In his social theory of recognition, Honneth argues that strong emotional attachments are the basis of "love relationships" (ibid.:95), of which recognition is a constitutive element (ibid.:107). From this approach, emotions can be regarded as an expression of experienced recognition (as well as disrespect) in social relationships.

Care is important to (re)create competences for citizenship. Within citizenship debates, care has mainly been discussed either as an obstacle to women's citizenship or as an expression of citizenship responsibilities (Lister 2007:56). However, as Honneth has shown, care does not only mean concrete practices or the distribution of material resources. Care also involves approval, encouragement, and feelings of esteem within such practices (Honneth 1995:95f, 107). Recognition is expressed in caring or loving relationships (see also Ahlmark et al. 2014) and is an

important aspect in the constitution of children's competences for citizenship. In this section, I will show how competences for citizenship can be provided within caring relationships. To do so, I will introduce my interlocutor Mary and show how an example such as hers has too often been analyzed following a specific direction.

Mary became deaf during early childhood. When her parents separated, she was given to her grandmother, her father's mother. Mary remembered this as the time of her unhappiest experiences. Mary's grandmother did not take care of her: Mary was frequently dirty, didn't have enough food, and, as she mentioned, learned nothing.

Other interlocutors experienced similarly intense exclusion and neglect by relatives. Without analyzing the circumstances, such expressions were too often stereotyped as a typical example of a disabled child, neglected and not accepted by their family.

Certainly, the question is not whether Mary felt poorly treated while she was at her grandmother's house. However, it can also not be said that her grandmother's behavior was not largely accepted and conformed to the norms of Acholi society. After her parents divorced, Mary was sent to her grandmother against her will. According to Acholi norms, a child belongs to the father's lineage – at least in theory. Mary's father could not take care of her, so he brought the child to stay with his mother, who was already old and had fewer material and financial resources. She had no interest in building a mutual relationship with the deaf child, which was expressed through not explaining anything to her and not spending time with her. Mary mentioned that her grandmother never taught her cooking or any other useful household skills; Mary wore old, tattered clothes and suffered from skin problems

due to insufficient hygienic care. After her grandmother died, she was finally able to move to live with her mother once her father and other relatives realized what poor condition she was in. Neglected in her grandmother's household due to limited financial resources, but also because she did not elicit recognition – or even misrecognition – from her grandmother, Mary felt loved, accepted, and recognized in her mother's household; she said that her mother taught her everything.

Mary's example shows that if a diversity of social relationships of kin is provided and present, competence for citizenship in terms of recognition and participation can be gained. Taking and giving, caring, recognition and responsibilities, expectations and distribution – all are important in different social relationships in different ways. Not all kin relationships are the same, and so-called cultural norms and values are not fixed but negotiable.

Opportunities and restrictions can both be part of kin relationships. The quality of kin relationships is important in gaining competence for citizenship – to make meaningful claims within the polity. In Mary's case, competences were distributed, and not all relationships led to competence; indeed, they also hindered her competence for citizenship, in this instance by neglecting her health, care, and education.

3.4 Communication: a matter of care

Many participants in my research described communication as an expression of loving and caring relationships, and its absence as oppression.[3] It is worthwhile to investigate this connection more closely, because it says a lot about how competences for citizenship are constituted for deaf children. To examine this, let me first go back to James' case. Not only did he discuss different people important to him during his childhood, but he also talked about different modes of communication he used in different situations and with different people: lip-reading and facial expressions, gestures, local signs, body performance, speaking, and writing. Communication for him was not limited to a standardized language, but included diverse practices in which attention and meanings were shared (see also Heiling 1995:39). James did not emphasize the mode of communication he used, but instead referenced the social relationships in which he learned and established these different modes. Communication can be seen as a mutual practice that is acquired in interaction and that expresses recognition. The acquisition of modes of communication comes about through sharing.

Furthermore, recognition was not experienced through individual skills or knowledge of a special language, but in performing the social practice of communication. Moreover, in practices of communication, recognition was expressed; at the same time, social relationships were created or maintained. For James, his mother's support – taking time to be attentive and guide him in his pronunciation – was experienced as feelings of care and love.

[3] See also Friedner (2011:22), who mentioned communication as an expression of care in the Indian context.

Participating in communication and expressing views and ideas are dependent on the willingness and abilities of both the deaf child and their possible communication partners. Willingness, attention, and time can be seen as important aspects of intersubjective recognition. The recognition given in the interaction of communication – and not the mode of communication as such – is what is most important to establish social relationships and feelings of equality (re)creating competences for citizenship. Competence here is expressed and practiced through attention and mindfulness. The partners of interaction for my interlocutors were limited by spatial distance and based mainly in kin relationships. At the same time, the children's dependence on the time and willingness of other relatives shows a strong power relationship.

Special social relationships, usually a close relationship with a sibling, were often highlighted by my interlocutors. James, for instance, described his relationship with one of his brothers as close. James and his brother established a language/communication; his brother provided information and explanations, always taking time to give attention to James and defending him when he felt bullied. Close relationships were bound to emotional feelings, trust, and a sense of security. It is often argued that deaf children growing up in hearing families experience loneliness and feel oppressed and excluded. According to the narrations of many of my interlocutors in Acholiland, this was not the case. Furthermore, in their memories, it was not the mode of communication, but meaningful communication itself – taking time, for example – that was important in establishing trustful relationships. Qualities like attentiveness and time are key to creating meaningful relationships; they facilitate one's competence for citizenship. Special or

very close social relationships were mentioned in the context of communication, but also in the context of the violence occurring during that time.

3.5 Oppression as an expression of unilateral recognition

In the experiences of my interlocutors, recognition in caring relationships was an important support in establishing social relationships, and it can be seen as creating competences for citizenship. However, interlocutors' social relations also led to feelings of oppression and neglect. James, for example, got angry when people pointed him out as a deaf person, and he felt oppressed when his mother refused to send him to school. Both recognition and misrecognition were experienced within the social relational field – sometimes even within one relationship.

A striking gender difference became evident. Many women I talked to reported being "kept at home," only helping out in agriculture or housework. For Jennifer, there was no one – no one taking time to talk to her, and no one interested in her:

> "I did not communicate with my family. I was just sitting there and doing nothing. I was alone. They were abusing me. I kept quiet. There was no communication. The hearing people were talking and discussing, but I have been alone. There was no person I could talk to. Other children refused to play with me. They wanted to play only with hearing children – not with deaf children. It was very bad. I was alone."[4]

[4] Interview with Jennifer, Gulu, October 23, 2014.

With nearly all interlocutors, I experienced a change in their stories about childhood alongside the duration and depth of their relationship with me: In our first meetings, they often described a situation similar to Jennifer's, but often these negative expressions subsequently became supplemented, overshadowed by more positive memories and taking into account other meaningful relationships.

Many told me that at family reunions or gatherings such as weddings, burials, and ritual celebrations – which brought together not only relatives who lived close by, but also those from far away – they experienced feelings of being left out. My interlocutors often experienced these times as observers rather than participants. People who had not seen each other for a long time wanted to exchange their stories; depending on the celebration, rituals were organized and food jointly prepared. Juliet told me that she would usually leave a crowded place to find her own space outside. "I just keep quiet," she said. In particular contexts, and especially for girls, the attention denied them led to their behavior of "keeping quiet". The expression "keeping quiet" refers to frustration as well as moral expectations. Women, especially, did not complain, but mainly kept quiet.

Moreover, more deaf women than deaf men remembered having negatively experienced social relationships, and many more deaf boys had been sent to school compared to girls. The fact that this was not only the case for deaf girls, but also for hearing ones might be explained by the region's patrilocality. After marriage, women leave their homes in the patrilocal society of Acholiland and enter their husbands' families, opening up new possibilities for social relationships. Both gender and family composition shape expectations for children's contribution to (future)

households and family. As such, these factors also shape children's opportunities and constraints in accessing resources such as schooling (Abebe 2013:81).

The oppression described by my interlocutors cannot be seen as an emotional state that was experienced in isolation; instead, it was experienced in relation to other people's opportunities. Often, financial resources and the advantages of hearing siblings led to feelings of resentment and oppression. James was angered by this situation and fought for his recognition, which finally led to support for him to attend school, but most children – especially girls – did not go to school. They stayed at home, witnessing their siblings and neighbor children attending school. Many of my interlocutors felt that this experience was extremely oppressive, and their feelings were expressed many times in sentences like "I only have been sent digging." Oppression was mentioned in terms of not being allowed to do things other children could do, not being sent to school, or not being part of communication. Recognition is not an individual emotion or experience based only on individual needs. Rather, according to Honneth, recognition is mutually established. Furthermore, both oppression and recognition can be experienced within the same relationship depending on the situation. What seemed to be important to my interlocutors was the expected normality, which they experienced through comparisons.

Comparison is important in feeling recognized, but is also a part of experiencing misrecognition. The comparison of deaf children with other children is an important dynamic for all children. Adults, as Ahlmark et al. (2014) analyzed, might relate their situations much more to their former experiences (see Chapter 4). Comparison is an important part of making claims; it is a crucial aspect in

establishing the expectations of both others and oneself, and it can drive motivation as well as frustration. Both expectation and motivation are based in mutual relationships within the relational field, the polity of kin.

It is evident that it is important to experience reciprocal relationships and recognition through a variety of channels: praise, food, clothing, shelter, school supplies, land, and also security. Interlocutors mentioned oppression stemming from relationships in which children contributed, but nothing was given in return, as was the case for my interlocutor David. He felt oppressed since he was the only one of his siblings who had to do difficult agriculture work, and he did not even benefit from it: he never received any financial support from the crops sold. Oppression might be better understood as a lack of mutual recognition in (social) relationships. Some deaf children felt that their families took advantage of them: they worked hard at home, but never gained anything in return. As Abebe has stated, children "earn their rights" instead of being entitled to them (Abebe 2013:79). Yet working and earning nothing with no recognition was seen as oppression. If a relationship was not reciprocal or no mutual recognition took place, the child not only felt oppressed, but also did not feel socially integrated.

Social integration and participation are not things a child learns individually; they are learned within the social relationships children create. Furthermore, difficult family situations and unclear or undesired responsibilities make it more difficult for a deaf child to find and develop strong social relationships and ways of communication.

3.6 Conclusion

Studies based on quantitative data that examine the school attendance of disabled children argue that the nature and extent of a child's disability play an important role, but so do factors such as institutionalized discrimination, neglect, societal stigmatization, limited resources, and limited parental support (Moyi 2012). Within such perspectives, children with disabilities are regarded as marginalized, stigmatized, and often excluded, and individual choices and desires are perceived as hindered by social, economic, or cultural barriers.

My research has shown that according to the childhood memories of deaf people in Acholiland, in the time before Ugandan Sign Language was introduced in the region, both the quantity and quality of social relations were of importance for deaf children's competences for citizenship in the polity of kin, which for them was the most important polity. Care is an important part of establishing and maintaining social relationships, as well as gaining competences for citizenship. In my interlocutors' experiences, recognition in care involved not only a plurality of practices, including the distribution of material and non-material resources, but also entailed recognition experienced through others' willingness, attention, and time. Furthermore, recognition within the social relationships of deaf children was always experienced in comparison with others, especially peers. In the daily lives of deaf children, the social agents they had to deal with were regarded as a barrier, not deafness itself.

Claiming "rights" in this context meant making efforts to receive resources as well as recognition within the social relational field. The frame of reference for deaf children did not involve a legal framework, but was instead created in the social

relational field – the polity of kin. Within these relationships, flexibilities – and thus competences for citizenship – were provided. For children, equality as an abstract ideal did not exist. Equality was experienced through loving relationships in comparison with other social agents. During the time of war and encampment, transitions of social relationships led to new constellations of interaction and access to competences for citizenship. Interdependencies changed over time.

Becoming competent for citizenship is less about individual skills and knowledge than about a process of becoming social. Within this sociality, rights can be claimed. While the citizenship approach focuses on individual people – on their capacities, knowledge, and skills to become a citizen in the future – the memories of deaf people in Acholiland indicate that a person becomes a citizen only in relation to others. In other words, competence for citizenship is dependent on the qualities of interdependency. From this perspective, oppression can be understood as a lack of meaningful social relations. Moreover, competence for citizenship is relative and situational and needs to be contextualized. Additionally, difficult family situations or unclear responsibilities make it more difficult for a deaf child to find and develop not only strong social relationships, but also ways of communication. Studies thus far have focused mainly on the abilities of deaf children, paying less attention to how such abilities are recognized and learned in mutual recognition and what results from these experiences. Through such attendance and recognition, social relations are established and competences expressed in such a way that the deaf child is regarded as a valuable and competent person.

Competence in terms of regarding children as future citizens has been understood mainly in the context of language development and the imagined ideas

of integration, inclusion, and participation, thus focusing on the acquisition of specific skills. But when the experiences of deaf people are brought into focus, integration and participation are instead expressed through time, attention, and willingness in the social relational fields of loving relationships.

This chapter has focused on a time before sign language. Often, my interlocutors described their communication during this time as simple local signs compared to the Ugandan Sign Language they learned later in life. In the next chapter, I will show how newly established institutions for deaf people led to the creation of new social relationships for them, consequently shaping their competence for citizenship in important ways.


Art work by Amos

Institutionalization

In the late afternoon, the compound of the Gulu Association of Persons with Disabilities (GAPWD) becomes a meeting place for deaf people: they come together to exchange news and information, discuss problems, ask for support, or just enjoy one another's company. Simon, the chair of the Deaf Union Gulu (DUG), who regards himself as a second-generation DUG member, explained the aim of the organization clearly: "DEAF LIFE SAME." In other words, the DUG believes that people should have the same opportunities for their lives as hearing people.

Simon could remember the time before deaf-related institutions were established and Ugandan Sign Language was introduced. Until 1992, a blind man owned the compound in Gulu that is now home to the offices of various Disabled Persons' Organizations (DPOs). When the war between the LRA and the government forces caused Simon and his family to move to Gulu, their new home was close to the compound. The blind man's house served as a meeting hall and workspace for a small group that organized support for people in need: sick people, old people, blind, deaf, and lame people.[1] Simon knew that deaf people were members of this group, but he did not feel close to them; nor did he regard himself as a disabled child.

His sense of self and belonging changed in 1993, when he became a student at the School for the Disabled in Apac, around 120 km southeast of Gulu. The School for the Disabled was a boarding school for children

[1] In the Acholi language, the term "disability" did not exist as a category at the time. Muyinda, for

with disabilities, including deaf children. At this school, Simon was first exposed to other deaf children communicating in Ugandan Sign Language (UgSL):

> "Before I learned UgSL, I only sat at home and concentrated on communication with my mother and sister – but they only spoke. There was no school at that time. The teachers were teaching in spoken language only. But when I went to school [in Apac], I learned sign language and got encouraged. I even went to the university and to the USA. That's how sign language changed my life."[2]

Vocational trainings were also offered within the school's curriculum: Simon explained that for boys, training in carpentry started in grade 4 as part of the primary-school program. He was supposed to learn carpentry and started helping out in a workshop during his school holidays, but he dropped out of the workshop and the school's vocational training in 1995. Instead of carpentry, Simon hoped to achieve Primary Leaving Examination (PLE), which would enable him to continue his studies at school. However, the School for the Disabled did not offer this possibility for him at the time.

After Simon completed his Universal Primary Education (UPE) (grade 7) at a Primary School for the Deaf in the eastern region of Uganda, a new set of challenges arose: he needed to find a secondary school, and he needed financial support. Simon's family found guidance and financial support at the Christoffel Blindenmission (CBM). Contrary

[2] Interview with Simon, Gulu, December 2015.

to what its name may suggest, CBM also supports those who are deaf and mentally disabled. The organization worked with the two oldest schools for deaf children in Uganda: one School for the Deaf in Kampala, and the one Simon had attended.

The CBM was willing to support Simon, and he started his secondary education in neighboring Kenya at the Special Secondary School for the Deaf. At that time, no secondary school in Uganda taught in sign language for deaf children. Due to structural challenges of the school in Kenya, Simon's family and the CBM decided to send him back to secondary school at in Ngora District and paid for a Ugandan Sign Language interpreter for him. Together with three other deaf people, he studied at the school from grades 1 to 6.[3] After Simon finished his secondary education, he went to Kyambogo University in Kampala and graduated with a BA in accounting and finance.

Since Simon started school at the School for the Disabled in Apac, he had become involved in manifold institutions, organizations, and networks of and for people with disabilities, both within the country and abroad. He was a board member of UNAD, and he also represented the northern region of Uganda for NUDIPU's youth committee. In 2012, he received a five-month Community Solutions Fellowship at Westchester Disabled On the Move, an organization for people with disabilities in New

[3] In Uganda's school system, primary school includes grades 1–7, usually referred to as P1–P7. The grade numbers start over again in secondary school (grades 1–6), referred to as S1–S6.

York City.[4] Part of this fellowship was to be taught in American Sign Language in classes at Gallaudet University for one month.

When his fellowship ended, Simon was accepted to a MA program in the UK, but could not find funding for the expenses he needed to live abroad. He settled in Gulu with his wife and child,[5] raising and selling chickens at his home. He wanted to give his knowledge to other people as well, so he began writing a book about raising chickens. Every afternoon, Simon opened the office of the deaf in Gulu and fulfilled his role as the voluntary chair.

Simon explained that although he received a chance at higher education, education possibilities were limited for most deaf people in Acholiland. Moreover, many of the vocational training courses for deaf people were short-term programs with rigid structures established by the NGOs that implemented them. "Deaf people can't choose. The deaf person's ideas are not respected,"[6] stated Simon. Furthermore, deaf people were forced by their families to take part in workshops and vocational training courses:

> "Some people in the villages, when they hear that there is something for free in the disabled center, they force the deaf person to take part. That was also the case in 2012, when youth came and got support from another NGO. Three came and said they liked to learn motorcycle mechanics. But the NGO said, 'No, you go and

[4] The program was sponsored by the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and implemented by the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX), an international organization based in Washington, DC.

[5] Simon became a father while he was a student at Kyambogo University. His wife has hearing difficulties in one ear; she can speak and sign.

[6] Interview with Simon, Gulu, December 2015.

> learn sewing.' One after the next left. After they realized that they were dropping out, the NGO forced them to go to the Gulu Youth Organisation. But once again, at the Gulu Youth Organisation, deaf people could not learn what they liked. Instead of learning mechanics, they could learn building."[7]

Despite the frustration Simon mentioned, many of the deaf people took part in the different vocational training courses, and some completed more than one. However, hardly any of them went on to work in the occupation they had trained for, as Simon explained:

> "And after the people finished the different workshops, you need to see: where are they now? They are at home digging. They also paid for the materials for each of the workshops, but the materials were not there. They just sold them; that's bad. People did not choose what they liked to [learn]. Only very few of them could do so. I asked deaf people who had their small jobs in town, 'Why do you come here and leave your jobs in town?' They said they have been forced. People learned, got their certificates, and kept them. One person even asked me if I could keep the certificate for him [which meant that the person did not regard it as useful at that time, but felt it might be useful in the future]. You see, these are challenges. Some were forced by family members or by the organization."[8]

The Deaf Union Gulu is the basis for many projects and programs, including sensitization projects about HIV and AIDS, teaching sign

[7] Interview with Simon, Gulu, December 2015.
[8] Interview with Simon, Gulu, December 2015.

language, or agriculture and pig farming. Such projects were initiated under the umbrella term of "development," with the aim to enhance the lives of deaf people by focusing on either knowledge transfer or the distribution of resources. Many such projects were directed through disability-centered organizations, but between 2005 and 2009, during the end of the war and the first post-war years, many NGOs had an office in Gulu, and some of them supported projects for deaf people as well.

> "But the NGOs have gone back home. [...] All projects ended. HIV/AIDS is finished, sign language is finished, sensitization is finished, now you focus where? We tried to change and started projects for pig farming and rabbit farming to help the deaf to change their lives from their home."[9]

Many projects today focus on poverty and food security in selected regions of Acholiland. "If you stay in those areas," Simon explained, "you can get help. But for deaf people, the continuation of sign language is important. How will they communicate to other people?" Sign language, as Simon described, is crucial to maintain the deaf network, share information, and get access to further resources and opportunities: "If one reads information in books, papers, or on the internet, we always share. And we give advice to other deaf people elsewhere about possible jobs or what and how to do things."[10]

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[9] Interview with Simon, Gulu, December 2015.
[10] Interview with Simon, Gulu, December 2015

4 The Introduction and Creation of Deaf- and Sign-Language-Related Polities

Simon navigated his education through deaf- and disability-centered institutions and organizations: the primary school for children with disabilities; the secondary school with translators funded by CBM; the Deaf Union Gulu and its programs; UNAD and NUDIPU as political-advocacy disability organizations in Uganda; and his stipend to work for a disability organization in the USA. Deaf- and disability-related institutions – schools, Disabled Persons' Organizations (DPOs), and both national and international organizations – played a crucial role in Simon's individual education.

According to Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck (2015:58), who follow a rights-based approach to citizenship, such individual education creates *deaf citizenship* in that the establishment of deaf-related institutions are seen as steps toward the equality of deaf people and development of their knowledge and skills. In the linear logic of this dominant rights-based approach, the creation of institutions and support for education opportunities – schools, but also vocational trainings and workshops, for example – lead to better chances of employment and thus to the enhancement of deaf people's lives (Abbay 2012:278; Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck 2015:33). In this argument, deaf people are often categorized as subjects who lack the necessary ability for economic empowerment (Cooper and Rashid 2015:xxiii). In countries of the Global South, education for deaf people is essentially understood in terms of development. In this developmental ideology, the possession of economically valued skills and knowledge is regarded as one way to become a

citizen in practice. In other words, these individual abilities, economic skills, and knowledge are seen as competences for citizenship.

International and national organizations, DPOs, and NGOs follow a (human-) rights-based approach in the approval of projects and programs, as well as in their public relations. The idea of *deaf citizenship* introduced by Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck (2015) describes the establishment of a *deaf-related polity* that follows a (human-)rights-based approach taken from concepts and approaches developed in countries of the Global North. The transfer of such approaches into countries of the Global South raises a question: Does the introduction of such a deaf-and disability-related polity in the Global South lead to the same dynamics for deaf people as have been postulated for countries of the Global North, despite their different socio-political and cultural contexts?

This chapter will challenge the ideological linear logic of *deaf citizenship*. In Acholiland, only a few deaf people gained competence for citizenship *in* the rights-based polity so that they were able to set meaningful claims *within* it. Instead, most gained competences for *clientship* in this rights-based polity.

Moreover, I will take a closer look at what is happening in and through such institutionalizations. Institutions and organizations are never neutral or value-free; instead, they promote ideologies and aims and are sites of translating them into practices, of which sign language can be seen as one. Institutions and organizations set standards, shaping social relationships and forms of learning, thinking, and recognition in important ways. I will show that institutions are not only places reproducing special ideologies and approaches – places to gain individual knowledge or skills – but are also sites where deaf people can experience a new kind of self-

esteem, creating new social relationships and *shared competences for citizenship*. These shared competences for citizenship are not necessarily accordant with institutionalized ideologies and practices – indeed, they challenge such ideologies and practices in different ways. Thus, while the creation of individual opportunities for education is highlighted in deaf- and disability-related polities, the creation of new social relationships through such institutions based on a shared practice – sign language – created new, life-changing opportunities and new possibilities to make meaningful claims – competences for citizenship – *outside* of these polities and within polities of kin and community.

In this chapter, I will examine three types of institutions and organizations: the Deaf Union Gulu; the School for the Disabled; and the church services for deaf people in Gulu Town, which take place every Sunday in the compound of the Gulu Association of Persons with Disability. I selected these three institutions due to their importance for my interlocutors. Throughout this chapter, I will show how these forms of institutionalization were expected to shape – and how they actually shaped – deaf people's competence for citizenship in manifold ways.

4.1 Encampment and newly established social relationships

In the previous chapter, I argued that children's competences for citizenship were distributed, especially within the polity of kin, and that their social relationships were crucially shaped by war and encampment. Spatial transitions from villages to camps and towns included the reconsideration of some relationships and the creation of new ones. In the situation of encampment, organizations and the

introduction of new categories of distribution played an increasingly important role to access needed resources. Moreover, information and access to resources were not provided to everyone within Acholiland in the same way. In the case of Simon, who came to Gulu due to the war, the town offered him and his family closer access to deaf- and disability-related resources. The importance of location is also relevant for families living in or close to the town of Lacor.

For many deaf children who lived in Lacor or in nearby IDP camps, Brother Martin, a Comboni missionary, became a central part of their lives: he provided support for deaf children to join the School for the Disabled in Apac, outside the main war zone. New relationships between families with deaf children were established, especially in places like Lacor, and information about existing schools for deaf children was exchanged. Moreover, the families guided and referred other families to Brother Martin to receive his support. Although institutionalization for deaf people in Uganda had started in the 1960s in the form of schools, until the 1990s most deaf people and their families in Acholiland either did not know about these schools or considered them out of reach due to their financial situation.[1] Furthermore, the insecure situation in Acholiland, followed by the region's relative isolation, made the spread of information – and the movement itself – difficult.

Brother Martin had lived in Acholiland since 1971. In 1984, he took over the lead position in the technical department of St. Mary's Hospital Lacor (subsequently referred to here as Lacor Hospital), the most prominent medical service in

[1] The first school for deaf children was opened in Kampala by Julia B.M. Lule in 1961, and her account of events has been recorded by the Danish Deaf Association. According to them, Lule's establishment of the school is seen as the "beginning of an account of the history of the Deaf in Uganda" (Krarup 1998:4). The second school was the one in Ngora to which Simon was sent.

Acholiland.[2] The hospital was not only important for its medical work, but also for its social engagement, especially during times of violent conflict. During the war between the LRA and the UPDF, the hospital offered shelter to thousands of children and adults every night. Children living in Lacor and surrounding IDP camps came to the hospital every evening, looking for a safe place to sleep, and went back home during morning hours. The hospital became a central spot to exchange information and to get to know other families, including those with deaf children.

When I visited Brother Martin in Lacor Hospital in October 2016, he was riding his bicycle within the hospital compound, giving advice here and there, checking construction work and handing out money to workers. He was definitely busy, and most of our conversation took place while I walked next to him. When I asked him about deaf people and why he supported them, I found his answer a bit astonishing. Because I had categorized Brother Martin as a Catholic missionary, I had expected a charity-based answer, but instead he explained, "You know, in the beginning, I only supported the very bright pupils for school and even for university, but I expected that they bring back good marks and work at Lacor [Hospital] during their holidays. Some of them became doctors and I was very proud of them."

"But," he continued, "later, so many other problems arose during the time of war and many children had enormous difficulties to access education. I paid school fees for deaf children, but they had to work at Lacor during their holidays. *I did not*

[2] http://www.comboni.de/news/kontinente/artikel.php?id=463 (accessed October 29, 2016); http://www.lacorhospital.org/HistoryBackground/Thehospital/tabid/496/Default.aspx (accessed October 29, 2016).

do charity,"[3] he emphasized more than once during our talk. Although Brother Martin has no social relationships with the families, many of my interlocutors mentioned "the *muno*" or "the *mzungu*"[4] from Lacor Hospital who had helped them visit the School for the Disabled in Apac, and whom they gratefully remembered. He paid their school fees; they in turn worked at Lacor Hospital during their holidays. If they did not come to work, he halted payment for their schooling.

The School for the Disabled was founded by the Catholic order of Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu and opened in 1985. The school was formally planned to open within Acholiland, but due to the insecure situation it was moved to Apac, part of the neighboring Lango subregion. Although the distance between Gulu and Lacor to Apac is about 120 km, the road conditions meant the journey to Apac takes at least a 3- to 4-hour drive. All the deaf students I came to know from Acholiland stayed in the boarding school and only came home during holidays.

As Simon mentioned, the school had a special program for carpentry. During school holidays, the children came back home and worked in a carpentry company in Lacor, located opposite Lacor Hospital; deaf people told me that they had worked repairing beds and doors. After some time, Brother Martin ceased the involvement of deaf people in his workshop. With the heavy machines, he said, it became too dangerous for the deaf people as well as others working there.

[3] Interview with Brother Martin, Lacor Hospital, October 10, 2016.

[4] The word *muno* is a term in Acholiland often used for white people. Sometimes white people were called *Mzungu (*pl. *Wazungu)*, a Swahili word meaning "European" in its translation. In Acholiland, both words are used to describe white people and sometimes also refer to a special kind of behavior or look connected with them. I use both words as equivalent to the sign for white people (running the palm of one's hand over one cheek repeatedly).

Nevertheless, all of the deaf people appreciated not only the opportunity to be in school, but also the ability to finance their own education. Many of the youth stayed in Kampala for vocational training and education in carpentry, supported by Brother Martin. Girls and young women later became involved in workshops for vocations like tailoring. As Brother Martin said, they could not afford all of the fees from their work alone, so the rest came from outside donors, both private and institutional.

From the perspective of deaf people, the distributed competences for citizenship by reaching formal education had been extended in two ways: first, more kin realized and recognized deaf children's possibility of attending school, and thus relationships changed in such a way that deaf children's kin actively started to support them. Second, when deaf children learned of the existence of such schools, they increasingly began to claim school attendance. New relationships to institutions, as well as to other families with deaf children, shaped deaf children's recognition and extended their distributed competences for citizenship within the polity of kin.

4.2 Becoming deaf: deafness as a new social category

While the war and encampment offered new ways of creating distributed competences for deaf children with regard to accessing formal education, within different institutions for people with disabilities (including deaf people), both social relationships and a new self-understanding as *deaf* people were established.

Many interlocutors in my study vividly recalled their experiences of first entering institutionalized spaces of people with disabilities, including deaf people. As Simon remembered, he knew other deaf people in Gulu, but he did not feel close to them. James remembered his arrival in the new school thus:

> "The following day we went in the car and reached the school in Apac. I saw all those people with disabilities – [those who were] lame and the ones signing. I cried. I wanted to go back home. Then Paul took me and said, 'Sleep! We have to study tomorrow.' I cried. One of the sisters [teachers] heard me crying and came and took me to their place where they stayed. The next day I became calmer. I was watching the sign language, but I did not know. I kept quiet. I started to learn sign language slowly."[5]

At school, deaf children were broadly categorized using the term "disabled," set in opposition to "people without disabilities," "hearing people," or "the majority." Before entering institutions such as school, their social relationships with other deaf people were limited; often they did not know any other deaf people. Furthermore, many told me that even when they met deaf people in IDP camps or towns, they usually didn't feel close to them. Schools like the School for the Disabled became important places where closeness to other deaf children was generated.

Becoming deaf is not, as often presented, a natural process initiated by deaf people. For my interlocutors, the process of becoming deaf – feeling close to other deaf people and at the same time making a new distinction between deaf and

[5] Interview with James, Lacor, April 27, 2015.

hearing – was initiated by institutions. In this context, sign language became a new connection to deaf development. The schools were places in which sign language was practiced, and sign language itself increasingly became an expression of formal education and development.

Entering such an institution and receiving its support were dependent on the categorization of disability and deafness. Despite the cultural definition of deafness, conceptualized as Deaf Identity, Deaf culture, or Deafhood, and the social model of disability, bodily conditions were key in being recognized as a deaf person or a person with disability and thus being recognized as a member of the deaf-and disability related polity and possible recipient of grants.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, schools played an important role in the idea of citizenship. As in Europe, formal education institutions were established to make "future citizens" and allow them to gain competences for citizenship for a life *outside* such institutions. Although my interlocutors became part in this new polity as *deaf* persons, they could hardly make meaningful claims *within* the institutions constituting this polity. This was not only the case for children – indeed, only a few deaf people gained competences for citizenship in the disability-related and rights-based polity (see Chapter 6). Of more importance was the creation of new sign-language-related relationships with both deaf and hearing people.

4.3 The creation of sign-language-related polities

As in the case of the School for the Disabled, violence and (forced) encampment were also major factors in the creation of both a deaf- and disability-related polity

following ideals of (human-)rights-based approaches and a sign-language-related social network in Gulu, albeit in different ways. As mentioned before, a group created by people with different impairments – blind, lame, and deaf – founded the Cooperative Society for People in Need in 1979, which subsequently became the Gulu Association of Persons with Disabilities (GAPWD). Its renaming expressed the shift from a needs- to a rights-based approach. In its beginnings, the cooperative focused on people in need and their access to material resources such as food and blankets. These people in need included those who were old, sick, deaf, blind, or lame, as Simon mentioned. At this time, only two deaf people were involved in the cooperative.

The aforementioned shift in approach took place in 1992 with the foundation of the GAPWD. The GAPWD was established as a collective voice of people with disabilities for *all* people with disabilities, following the ideological and structural approach of the national disability movement. Within Uganda, such DPOs were important participants in setting up the deaf- and disability-related polity, at the same time playing a crucial role in the creation of sign-language-related polities in Uganda.

The institutionalization of the Deaf Union Gulu (DUG), a district organization, had impetus from outside; it was especially supported by Action on Disability and Development (ADD). As part of a new "Deaf Development Program" in Northern Uganda that included the districts of Apac, Lira, and Gulu, the GAPWD became the first point of connection for the program. For its first meeting, which was announced via radio – the most widespread technology, although not directly accessible for deaf people – about 40 deaf people came from

different sub-counties to Gulu. During this meeting, the Deaf Union Gulu was founded.

That the new office opened in Gulu was not by coincidence. According to Godfrey, who was one of ADD's sign language interpreters, ADD's aim was to support existing groups of people with disabilities. Another important factor was the insecure situation in Acholiland. Although the drive to Gulu through Acholiland was far from safe, Gulu contained the headquarters of military support, one of the reloading points for the World Food Programme, and headquarters for various development organizations and international institutions. The program began in Gulu in 1996 – one year after Uganda's new constitution, which recognized people with disabilities for the first time, and four years after the end of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1983–1992).

In the same year that the program started, the government of Uganda announced that all people had to move to IDP camps. For many, living in camps was associated not only with terrible life situations, but also with insecurity: camps became new places for LRA attacks. Compared to people without disabilities, deaf people had many more challenges and difficulties in fleeing during these attacks.

Although all deaf people emphasized that the LRA never killed a deaf person on purpose, an overwhelming amount of deaf people feared the fighting. Due to their new situations in encampments, the possible exposure to violence, and difficulties in protecting deaf relatives, some families decided to bring their disabled relatives to Gulu – specifically, the compound of the GAPWD. Juliet, the oldest participant in my research at around 70 years of age, was brought to Gulu after her family was forced to move to the camp in 1996. They chose to do this for her

security; Gulu was seen as a safer place than the camp, Juliet's brother explained. He had been taking care of her and felt responsible for her if an attack were to occur, and it became difficult to protect her in the IDP camp.

As the compound increasingly served as a new home for people with disabilities, including deaf people, the Deaf Union Gulu established a network of persons with disabilities with the support of ADD. This network served to expand the deaf- and disability-related polities and included new positions in the committee of the DUG, further opportunities for development workers, and new opportunities for sign language instructors. While ADD was initially involved to a large extent, sign language training sessions were organized using a "snowball" model by the Ugandan National Association of the Deaf (UNAD): 20 deaf people received training in Ugandan Sign Language and Deaf culture for three days. The training took place in a hotel, after which participants returned to their respective villages, towns, and IDP camps. UNAD selected Joyce and Joseph, another deaf member, to go to Kampala and learn sign language for one week. Afterward, they came back to Gulu and taught sign language as instructors for three weeks. Joyce told me, "Then I went back to Kampala for one week to learn more, and like that we continued. That is how our sign language started to spread. […] We went to the villages and mobilized deaf people."[6]

Deaf people who had previously attended school were an important asset in the establishment of such networks. In the beginning, communication was channeled through either spoken and written forms, like Joyce was doing, or with the help of those very few deaf people who'd had the chance to attend a primary

[6] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, December 13, 2015

school outside Acholiland. They worked through "relay-interpreting," as Godfrey explained. In this case, relay-interpreting meant that information was given either in spoken language (through writing) or by UgSL and translated by the deaf people/instructors into local signs.

Due to the encampment situation and the difficulties of reaching deaf people outside Gulu, social networks became integral to establish contact with and reach deaf people. Under the title of "capacity building," deaf people visited churches and the offices of local councils to ensure that all deaf people became knowledgeable about sign language. During this time, they mainly went to different parts of Gulu and surrounding villages.

Deaf people were offered food as motivation to join these first meetings, and sometimes, Godfrey said, even hearing people tried to join by pretending to be deaf. In these first steps, the aim was to build an organizational structure to reach out to deaf people and introduce Ugandan Sign Language. For the first time, deafness became a quality that enabled special support and access to resources. During the time of war, this was definitely important – as evidenced by the fact that even hearing people pretended to be deaf. The newly created positions, as well as access to resources, were reserved for people with disabilities.

As in the case of schools, sign language became practice in NGOs and was part of funding resources and development. Local signs were increasingly seen as simple gestures differentiated from Ugandan Sign Language, considered a complex language in which people were able to express themselves. Ugandan Sign Language was connected to institutions and the development of deaf people as equal citizens; newly created schools or classes for deaf children and translation services were both

based on Ugandan Sign Language; and NGOs were working with UgSL interpreters. These might all be reasons why UgSL is still widely recognized compared to so-called "local signs."

At first glance, through schools' new institutional settings and the creation of roles within NGOs, deaf people gained competences for citizenship in a neoliberal understanding: as students, teachers, trainers, coordinators, chairs, etc. Furthermore, schools enabled deaf children to partake in a better quality of education that might also lead to the improvement of their lives. At the same time, however, these new positions were limited, and projects were only funded over a specific period of time. As Simon mentioned, most deaf people did not learn what they liked to learn; even with formal education – and, indeed, even if one was not deaf – finding employment was a challenge.

As part of the GAPWD and under the umbrella of NUDIPU and UNAD, the office of the DUG became the main contact for external funders for Acholiland, as well as for those within the NUDIPU and UNAD structures themselves. The DUG worked with different national and international organizations, including AVSI, Save the Children Uganda, One Vision, the UN Human Rights Commissioner, Uganda Human Rights Focus, UNHCR, and NUMAT. These programs were short-term and focused on advocacy, teaching (about HIV and AIDS, human rights, or agriculture, for example), and training in Ugandan Sign Language. Some of the grants were only given for deaf-related programs, while others were used to help all people with disabilities. Within deaf- and disability-related polities, deaf people learned to promote themselves to outsiders as vulnerable people with disabilities. Along with the dominant discourse of

development, people with disabilities, including those who were deaf, were seen as poor, uneducated, or neglected. This discourse was of importance to establish new claims in the name of development in deaf-related polities on national and international levels (see Chapter 6). Deaf people as persons with disabilities were included within the new rights-based polity less as citizens, with the competence to set meaningful claims, and more as clients of these various institutions and organizations.

At the same time, with the establishment of and participation in deaf- and disability-related institutions, new sign-language-related networks were increasingly established and extended. Although projects and programs were determined by donors, these institutional spaces created solidarity through shared practices of learning and mutual recognition. These shared experiences created new competences for citizenship beyond such institutions, and deaf people generated a new self-understanding not only as deaf persons, but as *deaf persons among others*.

4.4 Symmetrical relationships: prayers and church services

The introduction of Ugandan Sign Language was crucial, as deaf people became interested to share their life experiences for the first time. We can say that "newcomers" – in this case, deaf people from Gulu – became part of a community of practice formed around the new approach to rights and using sign language as a new joint practice. According to Lave and Wenger, to become a full participant in such new practices, the "social process includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills" (Lave and Wenger 2011 [1991]:27). This sign-language-related

polity was unlike the deaf- and disability-related polity, which was shaped by institutions following a rights-based approach and ideals of equality. Instead, this sign-language-related polity was (re)created through shared practices; perspectives and opportunities were discussed and created alongside narratives and histories; social esteem was experienced in symmetrical relationships with other deaf people; and consequently, sign-language-related spaces were developed at church, home, or the workplace (see Chapter 5).

Prayers and church services became central to the constitution of the new sign-language-related polity: unlike many other programs, projects, and organizations, they were led by deaf people from Acholiland themselves. Worship in UgSL took place on the compound of Gulu Association for Persons with Disabilities. For Christians, Sunday church visits were an indispensable part of the weekly routine, and all my interlocutors had attended prayer services since childhood. For many deaf people – especially for women, who took over the household tasks and were less mobile during the week – church was sometimes the only opportunity to meet deaf friends regularly. All participants in this study were Christian and had grown up in Christian families. On Sundays, between 20 and 40 deaf adults and youth, along with their children (most of whom were hearing), attended the service. Not everyone took part in deaf services every week: it depended not only on the distance from a family's home and the transport costs, but also on the services' incorporation in, and connection to, their families and neighboring communities. Moreover, special events taking place among different church congregations were preferred, even if no interpreter was around (this will be discussed more in Chapter 5).

Paul, the main pastor of the Pentecostal congregation, explained that the church was part of the network of the Emmanuel Church for the Deaf in Kampala. After his vocational program in carpentry in Kampala (he was one of the youth supported by Brother Martin and finished primary grade 7 in 1999), he became one of five deaf people selected from Uganda to join the program in Kenya.

Paul went to Kenya for the first time in 2004. For three years between 2004 and 2012, Paul joined DOOR International, a network that focused on translation of the Bible into different sign languages and the teaching of Bible studies with an emphasis on deaf people. "Only reading the Bible is hard to understand," Paul explained. Different Bible stories were provided on DVDs that were sometimes also shown at the GAPWD.

After church, people would stay to exchange news, get information, discuss social, political, and personal themes and challenges, and get advice and guidance. According to Friedner's work with deaf people in Bangalore, India, churches for deaf people create deaf spaces and are of utmost importance to building and maintaining social relationships. Moreover, churches can be regarded as spaces of a double conversion: into Christianity and toward deaf socialities (Friedner 2011). This can also be stated with regard to the church for deaf people in Gulu, but I became interested not only in the social dimension, but also in how the formats of sermons, storytelling, and questions and answers often picked up topics concerning relationships with hearing people (especially family members) and aspects of (in)equality. Deaf members of the church, particularly the pastor, offered guidance in dealing with these challenges. At the same time, the individual stories that were brought forward were recognized through further questions, and people received

emotional support and encouragement. Moreover, the church helped deaf people to understand each other, learn from each other's stories, and receive advice.

While for some, accessing church through sign language was regarded as a practice of becoming like hearing people in terms of knowledge, other deaf people told me that they started to teach family members based on their new religious knowledge. The creation of Bible-based education and knowledge led to deaf people's own recognition within the deaf network, while at the same time placing such knowledge on either the same level as – or even above – the knowledge of hearing people, especially family members. Moreover, the church served as a way to explain the experiences and/or newly interpreted oppressions of deaf relatives.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that during the time of war and encampment, institutionalization introduced new deaf- and disability-related polities, many of them following rights-based approaches. Part of this process was a new categorization between deaf and disabled people, on the one hand, versus "normal" people, on the other, as well as the creation and representation of deaf and disabled people as a vulnerable group. At the same time, deaf people started to experience mutual recognition in the creation of a new sign-language-related polity.

The differentiation of these two polities was based in different kinds of recognition. The deaf- and disability-related polity was grounded in legal recognition and was introduced from outside, while the sign-language-related social network was based in esteeming one another and created through the shared practice of sign

language by deaf people in Acholiland. Legal recognition, according to Honneth, is characterized by a "universalist conception of morality" (Honneth 1995:109), while esteem involves "the graduated appraisal of concrete traits and abilities" (Honneth 1995:113).

Although deaf people in Acholiland learned to situate themselves in a new polity in which they experienced legal recognition, at the same time only a few were able to make meaningful claims within this polity and thus create competences for citizenship – instead, many of them developed knowledge as clients of various institutions and organizations. Thus, the importance of legal recognition in creating competences for citizenship was limited.

More important was the transition of deaf people's esteem. The establishment of sign-language-related socialities and relationships was based on shared practices and experiences. In these shared practices, a new constellation of values emerged "which allow[ed] subjects to esteem one another for accomplishments and abilities that had previously been without societal significance" (Honneth 1995:128). Sign language became one such societal significance.

Sign language created new forms of solidarity, which, according to Honneth (1995:128), "can be understood as an interactive relationship in which subjects mutually sympathize with their various different ways of life because, among themselves, they esteem each other symmetrically." Unlike the asymmetry of kin-based relationships, sign-language-related networks were symmetrically established and based on a mutual recognition created through shared practices.

The next chapter will serve to deepen the understanding of a sign-language-related polity, showing its significance for the transition of other polities, including kin, and thus the transition of deaf people's competences for citizenship.


Art work
Amos

Going Home

Most of the grass-thatched huts had already disintegrated, leaving behind round shapes on the ground that adumbrated the composition and dimension of the former Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camp close to Alokolum, around 4 km from the town of Lacor. After more than 10 years living in the camp between 1996 and 2009, Patrick was preparing to move home with his two wives, Mary and Betty, and their children. They had started to build new huts and cultivate the long-since-overgrown land in the parish of Bwobo Tochi. Patrick's grandfather had been given the land in Bwobo Tochi after fleeing from the violence that arose during the time of Idi Amin's presidency, but the family had had to leave their land twice since then due to new violent situations. The first of these times, Patrick recalled, was in 1989; he was 10 years old when they left their home for months. The second time, in 1996, they were forced to leave their home by the Ugandan government. They ended up spending more than 10 years in the camp close to Alokolum.

In 2009, the family shared two grass-thatched huts next to each other. Patrick told me that the encampment had changed their livelihood fundamentally. In many ways, the stories about their lives during the time of encampment were about insecurities: ensuring (physical) protection; securing food; and accessing health services and medication – although because these were provided by aid organizations, there was rarely enough time or medication for everyone. Patrick mentioned that many people were in poor health, with rashes on their bodies and terrible

coughs. And many people died: "The World Food Programme handed out food rations consisting of posho, beans, and cooking oil, and the Red Cross gave other necessary household items, like blankets or pans,"[1] Patrick remembered. They waited in long lines to receive the goods, the quality and quantity of which were handed out according to family size and age of the members registered. "But," Patrick said, "people started to fight for it and steal from others."[2] Conflicts within the camp due to scarce resources, as well as the high consumption of alcohol, often led to dangerous situations like breakouts of fire, spreading fast among the closely grouped grass-thatched huts. Twice Patrick found his hut burned down. Attacks by the Lord Resistance Army posed yet another form of danger.

Patrick is the secondborn of 10 children.[3] While living on his family's land in Bwobo Tochi, he had been allowed to attend primary school as the only deaf child in his class. When they were forced to move to the camp in 1996, his family could not find a school close to the camp that accepted deaf children. One day, Patrick's brother learned about the Gulu Association for Persons with Disabilities, and together the boys walked to Gulu. Patrick described his first impression of the union thus: "Then we went around and there were many deaf people. I was looking at

[1] Interview with Patrick, Bwobo Tochi, December 14, 2015.
[2] Interview with Patrick, Bwobo Tochi, December 14, 2015.
[3] The firstborn had already died; the child following Patrick, a brother, died last year. His family suspected that someone had poisoned him. The fourth child, now a married woman, went to live at her husband's place. The fifth, a boy, went to a village very far away. The sixth is a girl. The seventh was married and lived near Kitgum. The eighth child attended school and stayed with the sister in Kitgum, because Gulu was more expensive. The ninth died when still a baby. The lastborn also attended school. Altogether, there were four girls and six boys; four died, and six remained.

them: old ones, children, they all used signs I did not understand. I was quiet. They looked like monkeys to me."[4]

Patrick started to learn Ugandan Sign Language at the Deaf Union Gulu with the others. One of his aunts offered him a place to sleep in Lacor, which was at least a bit closer to Gulu. Every morning, he left the house to walk to Gulu. When the first class for deaf children in Gulu opened in 1997, at a Primary School, Patrick joined the school, where he remained until he finished primary grade 6. At this point, due to the difficult situation at school, he decided to drop out, but another school for deaf children was too expensive for his family:

> "I felt that I was wasting my time at school with the drunk teacher, and I went back home. I started to repair bicycles. I was 17 years old, and I learned from my mother's brother how to repair bicycles. I always watched him. Then I started buying and selling small things like biscuits and cooking oil. There was no support for me to go to another school."[5]

Patrick got to know Mary, his first wife, and Betty, who became his second one, at deaf-related institutions. For Acholi, so-called traditional weddings (in contrast to religious ones) play an important role. Such weddings not only serve to celebrate the relationship between the bride and the groom, but deepen social relationships between two households, kin, and lineages. Traditional weddings include usually different acts in which relatives are involved, including an introduction of the groom to

[4] Interview with Patrick, Bwobo Tochi, December 14, 2015.
[5] Interview with Patrick, Bwobo Tochi, December 14, 2015.

the parents of the bride before the wedding, negotiations of the bride price, and the ceremony. The family of the bride can only claim their right to bring her home when the groom and his family have paid the whole bride price. These payments can go on for years until the groom is able to pay everything.

In the beginning, Mary's family didn't agree to Patrick's offer. After an attack by the LRA on their home, however, insecurity about being able to protect Mary caused them to change their minds, and they agreed to the relationship. Although it was difficult to obtain the necessary bride price during the time of encampment, family members helped Patrick so that he could at least pay parts of it to formalize his marriage to his first wife: he gave her family money, food, and animals. They agreed that he could hand over the missing parts later.

In 2010, I found that the family was already living in their (new) home in Bwobo Tochi. We went through fields of maize, groundnuts, and sesame. The compound was framed by two new round grass-thatched huts, one for Patrick and Mary, and the other for their children. Patrick's second wife and her youngest child had unfortunately died earlier in the year. Within a short walking distance lived Patrick's father and grandmother, as well as other relatives and neighbors. Patrick and Mary were the only deaf people within their village, but they knew many others and met them regularly in Lacor as well as in Gulu.

Patrick said that their life was much better compared to life in the camp: "We can do agriculture and have food; we can send our children to

school. Just sitting there and doing nothing is really bad."[6] Patrick and his wife were both primarily farmers. Although all families took care of the plots of land given to them, some work was done in cooperation with neighbors, for example heavy digging work in the fields. With four other families, Patrick and his wife made a game of setting the order of the fields to be worked on: writing numbers from 1 to 5, each family drew one number. Starting with family number 1, they established the order. "This is always fun and gives a bit of competition,"[7] explained Patrick.

Although many things had changed for the better, the biggest challenge was the family's need for cash. "I try to sell few things. I have a camera and can take pictures at weddings or other occasions and sell them. I've asked around and try to see if the local government can give any support. We always look for money,"[8] Patrick stated. When the deaf-related programs began, he became one of the first sign language instructors and was involved in different deaf-related projects. But after most of the projects closed, he had to find new jobs. The family needed money for school fees, school uniforms, and health services, but also for daily necessities like soap, clothes, and transport. Since 2013, the family had received financial support by the international NGO SOS Children's Villages for three of their children. The district also gave goats to people with disabilities, and the family was fortunate enough to receive one. Over the years, the goat gave birth to twins many times; they sold some of the baby goats for much-needed cash.

[6] Interview with Patrick, Bwobo Tochi, December 14, 2015.
[7] Interview with Patrick, Bwobo Tochi, December 14, 2015.
[8] Interview with Patrick, Bwobo Tochi, December 14, 2015.

Patrick's parents had separated, and while his father was still staying on their land, his mother had moved to Alero:

> "She is a very good person. We are very close and did not break up our relationship. My mother is really great. She is helping us and we are helping her as well. We check on each other. And if someone is sick in our family, she comes to help us. She can bring us to the hospital and cooks and prepares food. When my second wife died, my mother came and helped us."[9]

Since Betty died, their two children had been staying with her relatives. Patrick supported them financially, especially with school fees.

In 2014, Patrick was finally able to pay the rest of the bride price to Mary's family. His sister married, and her new husband's family brought the bride price – five cows – to Patrick. The introduction of the new husband and his family took place at Patrick's home, and many family members were in attendance. Patrick decided to use the cows to pay the last parts of his bride price, but Mary's parents had separated as well and both wanted to have the cows. Usually, the bridewealth has to be paid to the father – in this case Mary's father. But Mary's father himself never paid the bride price for Mary's mother. In the midst of this entanglement, Mary's mother argued that Mary could not belong to her father's clan until Mary's father paid his amount to her grandfather – Mary's mother's father.

> "If you pay the mother, the father will get upset and something bad might happen with my children. If you pay to the father, the

[9] Interview with Patrick, Bwobo Tochi, December 14, 2015.

> mother will get upset. I am worried. We have a big problem. I don't know why they are not cooperating. When one of my children dies, I will cry seriously. [...] They [the parents] need to discuss their issues and solve the conflict, and we can pay and be happy."[10]

As long as there was confusion and the problem went unresolved, Patrick feared that his children might die. In the meantime, the cows were brought to Patrick's mother, and she took care of them. Patrick would only give Mary's parents the cows if they came together and agreed, and then they could share them. Acholi culture is difficult, explained Patrick.

The last time I visited the family, in 2016, they told me about a new conflict which at that point had already been mediated and sorted out. Although it was clear which land Patrick's family could use, the dispute centered around who could actually sell the white ants from an anthill on the land. Patrick thought that he could collect the white ants and sell them himself, since the anthill was on the land given to his family. The neighbor saw it differently, however. She gave money to some youth from the market, telling them to go to Patrick and get the white ants. When Patrick was not willing to give them the sacks of ants, he was terribly beaten by the youth. The chairman of the Local Council wasn't around when this happened, but as soon as he came back, he got very angry about the situation and tried to mediate the case. The youth would not come again, Patrick said. "They fear me, because deaf people are strong, they think." When I asked him why he did not bring the case to court, he

[10] Interview with Patrick, Bwobo Tochi, December 14, 2015.

explained that it was not easy to do so; also, he still liked to live in the village.

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5 Expanding the Sign-Language-Related Polity

The experiences highlighted in the story above – of encampment and resettlement, kin and village relationships, the need for steady jobs and income – are aspects of life shared by many people, both deaf and hearing, in Acholiland. These manifold relationships beyond deaf- and sign-language-related polities are widely disregarded in anthropological deaf studies. Instead, what these studies mainly highlight are the shared experiences of being deaf, decontextualized from the social and institutional networks deaf people maintain and create (Friedner and Kusters 2015). Nevertheless, other aspects *are* deaf- and sign-language-related: relationships with deaf partners changed communication at home, and relationships with deaf friends and institutional networks extended both social and institutional relationships. Moreover, as I will show in this chapter, kin, village, deaf- and sign-language-related polities played an important role in the decision and process of resettlement.

In this chapter, I will show that shared and distributed competences for citizenship, which I have outlined in the previous two chapters, are interwoven and shape each other in important ways over time. In the previous chapter, I showed that the creation of shared practices – and through them, shared competences for citizenship – in deaf-related institutionalized spaces were supported through living conditions during the time of encampment, as well as through national and international focus on disability. Resettlement after the war brought new questions and challenges.

At the peak of displacement, due to increasing fighting as well as governmental pressure, 90 percent of the population in Acholiland were (forcibly)

relocated to IDP camps, and the other 10 percent lived in the towns of Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader (Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin 2014:285, 298). In 2006, when the war was officially declared over on Ugandan soil – but continued in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), and South Sudan (Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin 2014:285) – questions about resettlement became of utmost importance. The 20 years of conflict had led to the displacement of the entire rural population of Acholiland.

Both the IDP camps and the movement to Gulu had usually been regarded as a temporary situation, and it was expected that people would return to their homes at the end of the violent conflict. According to a quantitative analysis by Bozzoli, Brück, and Muhumuza (2012), voluntary return in the first eight months after the end of the conflict in Acholiland was influenced by the history of the conflict, access to services, and economic opportunities. Most of the people resettled between 2008 and 2010 (Hopwood 2015:389; Dunovant 2016:29). In her article, taking into account the vast majority of returnees who moved later, Dunovant (2016) emphasized the importance of social relationships with regard to the possibility of return. Cooperativeness during encampment, as well as during the process of return, played a major role for many families in her study.

Given the importance and special weight of social relationships, the results of analyzing deaf people's decisions and (future) perspectives of livelihood point in the same direction. Patrick's case displayed his predominantly good relationships with kin and village members, as well as his strong feelings of responsibility for his family. But one's willingness to maintain kin relationships, as I will show, depends to a great extent on the experiences within such relationships, including

(mis)recognition. Additionally, although social networks of kin and village connections were important for deaf people in making decisions and actually creating or maintaining households in the resettlement process, new deaf- and sign-language-related networks played an equally important role.

My first step in this chapter will be to look into aspects influencing the decision and dynamics of creating a new home, either on family land or in town. In the next step, I will show the dynamics that caused Gulu and deaf- and sign-language-related networks to become a magnet for resettlement, especially for young deaf people. Working in town was not only connected to economic opportunities, but was set in the context of sign language based socialities. Furthermore, some dreamed of being able to buy their own land – close to Gulu, in a good neighborhood, and in cooperation with neighbors who already knew UgSL and were open to the arrival of deaf people.

Overall, this chapter examines the quality of social relationships important for livelihood, shaping shared and distributed competences for citizenship after the war and time of encampment. According to my data, the sign-language-related networks' shared competences for citizenship and the distributed competences of kin and village networks were both important aspects in making a decision about resettlement. Moreover, shared and distributed competences for citizenship shape each other and point not only to a transition in deaf people's competences for citizenship, but to a transition in the society they are part of.

5.1 Land: making claims and having rights

As exemplified by Patrick's story, the time after encampment and war changed livelihoods in fundamental ways. Decisions had to be made about when and where to move – or, for some, whether to stay. One's social networks of kin and village played an important role in the decision, as well as in the process of resettlement.

Prior to mass displacement, approximately 80 percent of Acholi were subsistence farmers (Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin 2014:298). After 20 years of war, the government and international organizations expected land conflicts between households and clans – as well as conflicts between the government and commercial investors – due to a presumed breakdown of Acholi culture, including knowledge about the previous use of the land. While in the first years after of resettlement, the prevalence of land conflicts was very high, most of them were resolved, leaving only a small amount of unresolved cases (Hopwood 2015; Dunovant 2016). Disputes about land and distribution were mediated within communities, with the increased presence of Local Councils I and II. Social relationships, as the studies of Hopwood (2015) and Dunovant (2016) have shown, were significant as means of discussion and making claims to land. Many of these land disputes were complex due to the intricacies of land distribution, and often claims were answered with counterclaims.

According to the Ugandan law, both women and men can own land, but in Acholiland, this is less a "right" than a matter of claims being made and negotiations taking place (Hopwood 2015:389). 90 percent of Acholi land is customary land (ibid. 2015:388). In Acholiland, clans (*kaka*) have historically constituted the distribution of land to their kin; still today, access to customary land is through kinship. Despite clan relationships – and for women, access to land through

husbands – other aspects can become important in claiming land: strength of ties to one's clan of origin, whether they have integrated well, their recognized contribution to the village, and length of time on the land (Hopwood 2015:392).

Accessing land is based on claim-making, which in turn is based on social relationships. Competence for citizenship regarding land is distributed in local social networks, which could even extend beyond kin and clan relationships. We can better speak about claims than about rights, as Hopwood argues, which also means that negotiations are inherent in all land occupation and use (Hopwood 2015:390).

Kin and community relationships were at the fore in Patrick's case; he never questioned moving back to his family's land. For other deaf people, claiming land for their return sometimes proved difficult, either due to missing (or even unknown) social and kin relationships or because of issues regarding communication, an important aspect of claim-making.

This was the case for Denis and his wife Stella, a deaf couple. The two were renting a grass-thatched hut in Gulu and planned to go back to their family's land (more specifically, Oringa's family's land). When they reached this land, however, they were not welcomed: "When I first went back after the war, a lot of confusion started and I went back to town. People were complaining about me: 'Where have you been? Where did you come from?'"[1]

All communication with Denis' relatives took place in local signs, since they did not know UgSL nor could they write or read. Denis built a hut in the village, but whenever he went to work in Gulu and left Stella and their children in the village,

[1] Interview with Denis, Gulu, April 27, 2015.
[2] Interview with Denis and Stella, Gulu, April 27, 2015.

Denis' uncle and his wife were not nice to the children and never shared anything with them. "She [his uncle's wife] might be jealous," Denis said, "because we have planted beans and the beans were growing well. God will provide for me."[2] When Denis told me about their conflict, he was very emotional; for him, this conflict was taking all his energy. "I have to be patient. God will provide for me, and I need to forgot about her behavior."[3]

One year later, the land dispute was negotiated and solved within the family. "If I fail to discuss anything, I will go to them, discuss it, and go back to Gulu Town. But now, we live in peace together. […] Sometimes they come and talk with us, and they have started to learn UgSL bit by bit. They have very big hearts,"[4] Denis said. However, his story shows the importance of kin relationships in the process of building a home.

As the cases of these two families have shown, accessing and using land is based on meaningful social relationships, especially with kin and neighbors. The extent to which social relationships could have been upheld during the time of encampment seems to be of importance as well. For deaf people, hearing loss does not make claiming land a different undertaking, as evidenced by these two cases; that is, their claims were not questioned due to their deafness. However, claiming land – and consequently gaining competence for citizenship – is based in relationships and the mediation of kin and community, which can be expressed through communication. Communication is of major importance for one to make such claims, as well as to understand others' claims in order to make counterclaims.

[2] Interview with Denis and Stella, Gulu, April 27, 2015.
[3] Interview with Denis and Stella, Gulu, April 27, 2015.
[4] Interview with Denis, Gulu, October, 2016.

However, not all deaf people and families wanted to move back to the villages. While their ability to access land was dependent on kin relationships, for some, the decision not to return could also be found in the ruptures of kin relationships, as can be seen in the cases of Emmanuel and Jackson.

Emmanuel was working in Gulu, making signposts in a small shop. I asked him why he had come to Gulu, and within the first two minutes of our talk, he summarized some of the drastic experiences of his childhood:

"Why? Because the rebels shot, but deaf people could not hear it and could not run to hide in the grass. Why? My mother took my hearing brothers and sisters. I was the only one staying and sleeping. They left the hut open and did not leave even a blanket. I took clothes to cover myself when I woke up. In the morning, I found my father shot by the LRA. [I said] 'Why do you refuse to help me? Why do you oppress me? Do you want me to die? It would be good of you to support me slowly, but, ah, you refused, you can remain, I will go.'"[5]

His mother heard the rebels approaching and managed to pack some clothes and other items, fleeing with Emmanuel's siblings and leaving him and his father behind. That night, many people in the village were taken by the LRA and four were killed – Emmanuel's father among them. After that, the family took shelter in the town of Kitgum with relatives. In Kitgum, Emmanuel started to learn UgSL. He came to know about the deaf network in Gulu, and after the war, he decided to go to Gulu instead of returning to his village with his family.

[5] Interview with Emmanuel, Gulu, October 25, 2014.

Jackson came from Olel, a village in Gulu District. His family first moved to the IDP camp in Awach, and from there they moved to Gulu. He visited the Gulu Association for Persons with Disabilities for the first time in 1994, and he received support from the NGO World Vision to attend the school in Apac, then Laroo Adra Primary School in Gulu (primary grades 1–5). After that, Brother Martin supported Jackson's carpentry education in Kampala, and he started working at Lacor Hospital. Later, he found a job in Gulu as a carpenter. He lives with one of his uncles in Gulu; his parents and siblings went back to their village. He did not want to return with them, mentioning how badly his family treated him at home: when he felt sick, they never brought him to the hospital, but instead used local herbs. His brothers would also beat him a lot.

In the cases of both Emmanuel and Jackson, ruptures of kin relationships and emotional experiences of misrecognition played important roles in their decisions not to return to their villages with their families. Moreover, their experiences during the time of encampment and the introduction and creation of new deaf- and sign-language-related networks were crucial to these decisions. Although it was expected that most people would resume their old ways of life after the war, people's experiences during encampment shaped their decisions to return in important ways. Economic opportunities were another major aspect influencing one's decision to stay or move to Gulu.

Acholi is described as a patrilocal society in which the women marry according to clan exogamy and traditionally or ideally move from their parents' place to their husband's place. Although this is considered the ideal, in practice, relationships and access to land in Acholi were – and became – much more diverse.

Through the increase in divorces, the deaths of family members due to AIDS, and the violence of the war, new household constellations and relationships were created with regard to land. Furthermore, interethnic marriages made access to land even more complex and diffuse in different parts of Uganda.

"Women cannot own land" is a common phrase in Acholiland, but in reality, this is not the case, as Hopwood argues. Legally, women and men have the same rights to buy, sell, and own land. Regarding customary land, "it is essentially the case that individuals of neither gender 'own' land, rather that the types of claims men and women can make for use of or control over land differ" (Hopwood 2015:389).

In the cases above, I described claims of men on their family's land. At the end of my research, I realized that I had paid less attention to how women could claim land because I took it for granted that they couldn't do so. This does not seem to be the case, which many examples from my data can corroborate: Denis, for example, planned to ask Denis' wife Stella's family to give them land in case the conflict would not be resolved. Emily stayed on her mother's land, which was given to her after they suspected bad spirits lived on her father's land. Moreover, many women not only used the land surrounding their homes (patrilocal), but had a garden close to their own relatives as well.

However, land was only one issue of many in the question of resettlement. The reasons for moving to town, instead of returning to one's village, differed, but were mostly connected to oppressive relationships with family members, economic opportunities in Gulu, and the supportive sociality of deaf people.

5.2 Facing economic challenges

While programs and projects often focused on the improvement of livelihood through individual education possibilities, young men in particular created their own networks and economic access and extended sign-language--related spaces outside of disability- and deaf-related institutions. A strong gender aspect can be seen regarding economic activities.

Patrick, mentioned above, was involved in different income-generation activities, including photography and bicycle repair. He also received support from organizations for school fees and got support from the government. All of these channels helped his family in important ways over time, he emphasized. Some activities and grants had a requirement to apply as a group with other people with disabilities.

Many of these opportunities were bound to one's location and access to information, to other people with disabilities, and to projects and programs. Deaf people's proximity to town offered important additional income. They relied on deaf connections for accommodation and jobs. Those new to Gulu could find support and help through other deaf people in town.

Many of the jobs deaf people held were described as "SIMPLE JOBS" and translated as "pitypity jobs":

> "In Gulu, it is hard to get a paid job, but you can find pitypity jobs, SIMPLE JOBS, like carpentry, cleaning the bank or offices, loading and unloading trucks. But getting a paid job is hard, like governmental jobs. You need to have the qualifications. If you have the required qualification, you can get a

> job as well. But if not, sorry. […] You go back and dig and sell. You can cut trees and burn into charcoal and sell. You can take care of cattle and sell them. Some other people work in the rice and maize mills in Gulu Town; others are farming, some repair shoes, others motorbikes and bicycles, some have mills for grinding maize. One, in Lacor, makes money with phone calls. Others who are lazy cannot get a job."[6]

Most deaf people living in Gulu were employed on a daily basis or had a small business themselves. Formal contracts did not exist. Furthermore, some jobs were seasonal, like work in one of the rice and maize mills in Gulu.

Especially for families, the town offered diversification through small jobs and agriculture, as well as new possibilities for deaf people to face challenges or uncertainties. Furthermore, the proximity to sign-language-related socialities – and consequently, the information about possible governmental and non-governmental projects and funding opportunities – was seen as a huge advantage over living in a village, as Robert, who had permanent employment as a store manager of one of the rice and maize mills, emphasized:

> "I came back to Gulu Town because there are so many deaf people here. The communication is very easy, and cooperation is easy as well. But if you stay alone, you will not become aware about [programs]. When you are sick, it becomes difficult to communicate. In town you can read the newspaper, exchange information. Second, when there are projects for the deaf you will

[6] Interview with Paul, Gulu, October 23, 2014.

know about them and work together. It's simple. But if you stay alone, you will not become aware of it."[7]

Working environments in town included both deaf and hearing workers. Within these different working environments, deaf people worked closely alongside hearing colleagues, and many of their hearing colleagues started to learn sign language as well.[8] Robert stated, "We can easily communicate with hearing colleagues – bit by bit. But we don't have conflicts; we make fun and joke together."[9]

Only a few people considered vocational training, such as carpentry or tailoring workshops, to be important. Getting a job and being able to earn income were not only based on formal skills; indeed, not very many deaf people worked in a field they were formally trained in. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many deaf people attended workshops and courses in subjects they did not want to learn. Nevertheless, such workshops were important to connect with other deaf people in order to deepen sign language skills and social relationships.

From this perspective, land-related disputes were not the only hindrance to deaf people's return to their villages. Some did not like to go "back home" due to feeling misrecognized, used, and oppressed, as Angelo mentioned. Furthermore, their family's land was regarded as too far away from the deaf spaces that had become so important to them, so they rarely visited their families. The importance

[7] Interview with Robert, Gulu, October 24, 2014.

[8] One group of deaf people in Pabo was an exception: the group consisted of about 10 deaf young men who decided to stay in Pabo, a former camp, instead of going back to the village. They had their own business grinding rice and maize. Most of the women there went back to the villages, however.

[9] Interview with Robert, Gulu, October 24, 2014.

of deaf socialities for most deaf people living in Gulu is expressed by their decision to move there from different parts of Acholiland after the war ended. All of the deaf people I spoke with emphasized the importance of sign-language-related socialities, which allowed for company, chatting, and the exchange of news and information; the possibility to discuss issues, including personal issues, and receive guidance from other deaf people; the deaf connection, which could help one find a job in town; and access to projects and programs. This shows that the social relationships of the past, the present, and the possible future were all of importance in deaf people's decisions regarding resettlement processes.

5.3 The value of sign language in the creation of social relationships

Sign-language-related socialities led to new opportunities regarding where to live, as well as a new diversification of household settings. Often women lived on and managed the land, while men took on additional work in Gulu to have some extra income. This in turn meant that men were more likely to join deaf networks, while woman had to deal more with kin and village relationships. Some of the women I talked to felt lonely in the villages, especially when no other deaf people or people who knew UgSL were part of their daily work.

However, men and women emphasized that hearing people were interested in learning sign language, considering it to be very positive progress. Through sign language, new meaningful social relationships were established. I found it astonishing that in many primarily hearing-related spaces in Gulu, I could always find people to translate – usually friends of deaf people who had learned sign

language. Many of them were really happy to have become part of such a network. Increasingly, hearing people shared the practice of sign language, extending social networks of friends and kin in meaningful ways.

Although my interlocutors sometimes expressed frustration when they talked about the situation at home and their difficulties in teaching relatives sign language, both deaf people and their hearing family members regarded sign language positively, as it offered the possibility to extend social relationships. However, this acceptance of sign language is not the case everywhere, as Friedner (2015) describes in her work. According to her research, deaf people in Bangalore, India, felt increasingly disconnected from their families due to the new language and the creating of deaf socialities. In Acholiland, however, my data shows that the importance of creating and mending social relationships using UgSL became a new practice for building meaningful relationships and, thus, for extending not only deaf people's social relational networks and competences for citizenship, but those of hearing people as well. For example, James' sister was sent to a boarding school that included deaf children. When she returned, she knew UgSL and could easily translate for him. Furthermore, deaf people married other deaf people and households were created with at least two sign language speakers. Their children then learned sign language as well.

Questions about resettlement were complex and individual, but in all cases, they were dependent on social relationships; these relationships offered many different kinds of livelihood. (Re)creating competences for citizenship meant first (re)creating meaningful social relationships to access information, job recommendations, or resources.

Furthermore, this diversification of jobs led to new household constellations of deaf people. Where before the introduction of Ugandan Sign Language, one's living situation was mainly dependent on relationships within kin networks, new social relationships expanded to influence one's decision to stay in a village or move to Gulu; this resulted in the creation of multiple "homes" in town as well as in the villages. Household compositions were – and are – fluid, as the stories of my interlocutors have shown: people sometimes changed households for different reasons and over various periods of time. Many deaf people became part of at least two households: one within a village and one in town. These multiple household settings became possible through the diversification of jobs in Gulu, but especially through the deaf socialities in town. Following this, "home" could also be seen as an expression of good social relationships as well as competences for citizenship.

5.4 Unifying aspects of Christian beliefs: overcoming conflicts between deaf and hearing people

All social relationships, regardless of strength, contain conflicts. My deaf interlocutors mentioned that Christian beliefs and church-based networks were important for them in overcoming conflicts, especially with hearing people. Religion was an important aspect in the lives of all the deaf people I spoke with. Moreover, it was part of their everyday lives. No workshops started without prayers; the bus driver would not set off without prayers; and in daily talks God played a role as a helper, someone who was watching out for them and who could give hope in

difficult situations. The overwhelming majority of people in Acholi, including my deaf interlocutors, attended one of the many Christian services held on Sundays.

Going to church was mainly a family event every Sunday, and most deaf people were introduced to church through their families. Depending on the age when they became deaf, their image of God and religion and their understanding of the services' content differed, as did their ability to make sense of the sermons. James described his prayers as "babbling" before knowing either UgSL or what God was about. For Barbara, God was a "very big person high up in heaven,"[10] but after she learned UgSL and attended the church for deaf people, this image changed. Today, she considers God a supernatural being. After taking part in the services of and for sign language speakers in Gulu, many deaf people stated that they had become able to follow other services as well.

Churchgoing and religious practices were less about individual development; instead, they were regarded as important for creating and maintaining social relationships and overcoming disputes within families. As I argued in the previous chapter, the establishment of the deaf church opened up a new space of deaf socialities in which deaf people created a shared understanding of values and discussed their problems; the sermons particularly helped them in overcoming oppressive behavior. These aspects have also been described by Friedner (2015) in an Indian context. The situation in Acholiland changed after the war, since women were especially likely to go with their families back to their villages. The church for deaf people in Gulu was often too difficult to reach due to distance and transport costs. However, although all the deaf people in this study attended this church at

[10] Interview with Barbara, December 2016.

some point, they continued to visit other Christian churches even after resettlement. Deaf people increasingly received help from hearing people, who would translate worship for them. Furthermore, some churches actually had translators for deaf people, making it easier for them to follow along. These are very recent developments, which once again shows the progress made in connecting deaf people – in this instance, as members of the church.

From the perspective of my interlocutors, churchgoing and religious practices offered help for the creation and maintenance of social relationships, especially within families. As Christine mentioned, "We are experiencing peace, love, and joy at home without violence through constant and regular prayers and churchgoing."[11] Similarly, Caroline stated, "The Christian belief helps me to control my family by making my family God-fearing, peace-loving, and respectful to others."[12] The Christian belief, discussed in concrete situations and connected to the individual lives of deaf people, guided their behavior in significant ways and supported the overcoming of disputes in social relationships through the values of forgiveness, patience, and humility. Furthermore, religious practices were regarded as important to (re)create social relationships – especially those with kin – as well as solve problems and resolve conflicts.

Therefore, social relational networks based on church membership or attendance became important in understanding and overcoming oppressive relationships, especially with hearing family members. Consequently, churches were

[11] Interview with Christine, December 2016.
[12] Interview with Caroline, December 2016.

important for the creation, maintenance, and rebuilding of different kinds of relationships – deaf as well as non-deaf.

Religion shapes social relationships; thus, it also shapes shared and distributed competences for citizenship in various ways. Religion fosters a shared understanding, and the church creates space for sociality – not only between deaf people, but between *all* people. While many of my interlocutors stated that they had felt excluded within church before they learned UgSL, they became better connected to churches attended foremost by hearing people after they learned UgSL. Moreover, attending church created other social relationships and more opportunities to meet people than in daily work. Thus, for some, church visits were seen as a good opportunity to escape daily monotony.

The sermons continually brought forward specific norms and values and mentioned that everyone was the same – regardless of whether one was deaf or hearing. This ideal of sameness, and ideas for overcoming grief and hatred, made such gatherings an important source of ways to handle oppression. Deaf people felt that they were members of the Christian network or "community of faith."

This unifying aspect of belief has sometimes been set in opposition to culture. Christian belief was connected to a wider cross-border community, while culture was regarded in terms of local practices as well as beliefs. The ideas of "modern" and "traditional" – religion versus culture – were mentioned, especially with regard to practices of healing. *Ajwaki*, traditional healers in Acholiland, were mainly regarded as cultural, and from today's Christian perspective, they were considered a poor choice to seek for healing, while biomedical treatment was

recommended by the church; it was not seen as opposing Christian beliefs and practices.

Most of the participants in this study became deaf due to sickness, and many of them felt that their family's choice to bring them to a healer was connected with their being (mis)recognized. Some even suggested that the *ajwaka* had made them permanently deaf, but that their parents did not know this at the time. Religious instruction – particularly discussing, reading, and interpreting the Bible – created a new understanding of practices and, thus, of relationships. Indeed, it influenced James' relationship with his family: "I try to teach my family. Some are not going to church. They are still following the culture of Acholi. Please go to church and praise God. You can remain poor if you are not going to pray. Please come with us."[13]

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown the importance of various polities important for deaf people, including deaf- and sign-language-related polities or those of kin, community, or religious organizations. Research in the field of deaf studies, including anthropological approaches, have focused mainly on deaf–deaf connections – framed by Frieder and Kusters (2015) as "DEAF-SAME," but also conceptualized as "Deaf culture," "Deaf Identity," "Deafhood," or "Deaf Gain." This focus too often disregards how deaf people are not only part of various other socially and institutionally created polities, but also *how* they are part of these networks' creations and transformations.

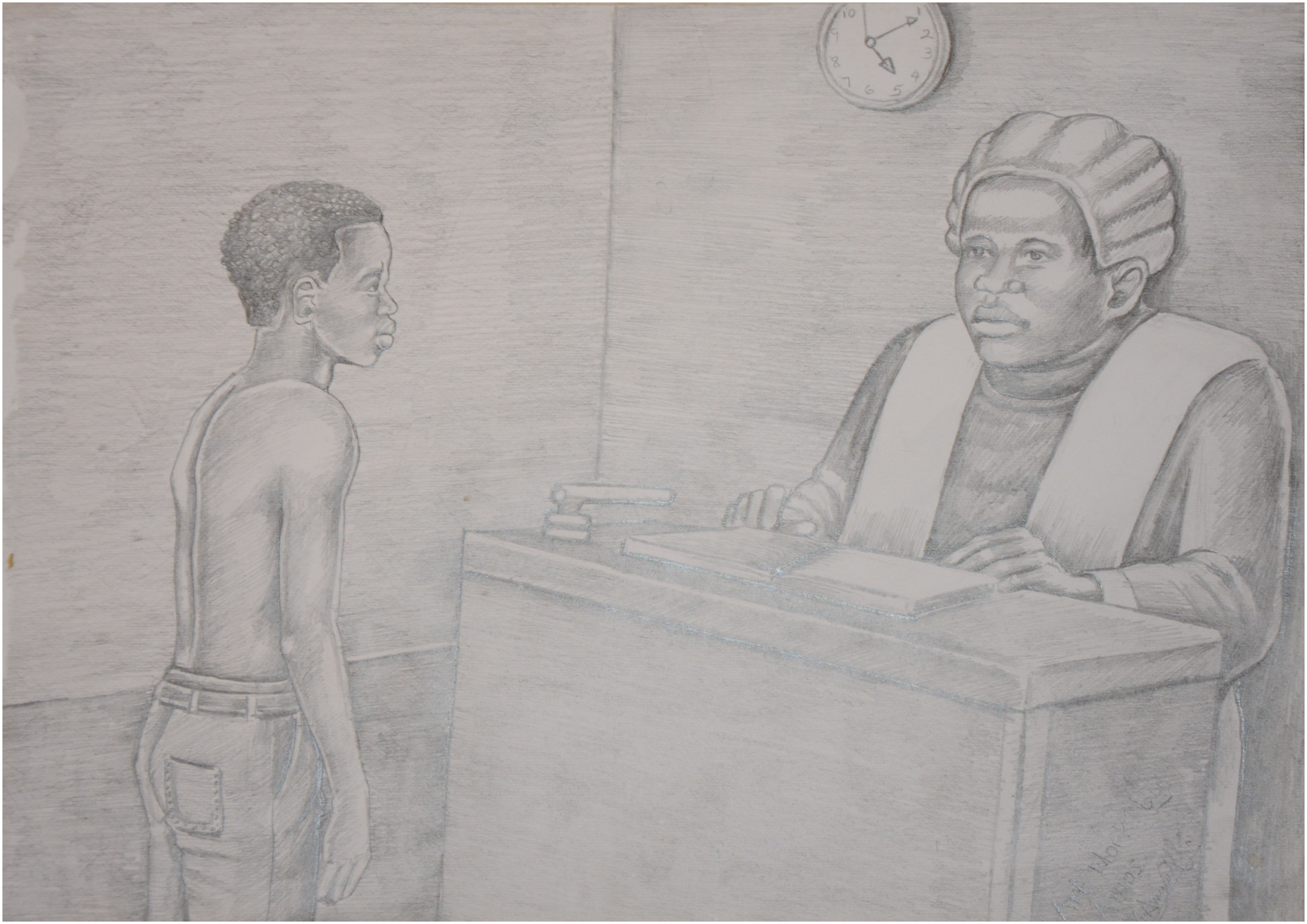
[13] Interview with James, Lacor, April 27, 2015.

The concepts of shared and distributed competence for citizenship have brought these polities to the fore, highlighting how they are established from the perspective of deaf people and revealing the extent of their importance in gaining competences for citizenship.

Moreover, I have shown that the creation of deaf- and sign-language-related polities not only extended the relationship networks of deaf people themselves, but also those of their families. At the same time, the sign-language-related networks were extended so that hearing people increasingly started to learn Ugandan Sign Language while working or living with deaf people.

A more detailed focus on gender aspects would be of interest in this context. Roles within families; spaces and tasks; responsibilities and expectations of men and women, boys and girls – all are different. There has only been brief mention of how deaf children and adults experience these roles, and for what reasons. More research would help in understanding these dynamics better, instead of reinforcing the standard assumptions that deaf girls and women were more oppressed per se. Men – both deaf and hearing – seemed to share another kind of network; women seemed to as well.

Claiming legal rights was – and still is – regarded as the dominant polity and guides the politics and institutional focus of deaf related-polities not only in Uganda, but worldwide. In this chapter, I have illustrated the importance of manifold polities in gaining competences for citizenship. Against this background, then, what role did national and human rights play in gaining competences for citizenship for deaf people?



Rights and Responsibilities

Gitte: What is a good citizen for you?

Ronald: Well, I think a good citizen is a person who understands and fulfills his or her roles and responsibilities, not a person who blames others for his or her failure to take over responsibilities. A person who understands and accepts his or her roles and responsibilities to achieve aims in life that contribute to nation-building – a person who is able to help others in need, and a person whom I can see has a heart for Uganda.

Gitte: What are the responsibilities?

Ronald: When we talk about responsibilities, it can be in the form of contributing to our communities. For instance, take the example of a village: If there is a decline in the quality of education at school, I feel the responsibility to contribute to that school. I could provide some funds rather than waiting for the government to improve the services. This means being responsive and addressing the problems before the situation worsens as we wait for the government to come – which in most cases takes a long time.

Gitte: Do you think that the government is helpful for securing education or access to health services?

Ronald: From my perspective, I think I am biased. Because of my growing up as a deaf person, my way of life and the way I

struggled were a bit different from the experiences other people had: I went to school without interpretation services, for example. Personally, I feel the government did not attend to my needs. Now, after growing up in an often difficult and unfriendly environment, I feel I can live in any situation. I do not even need the government to come and help me.

Not only did I lack sign language interpreters at school when I was young, but I still lack interpretation at the hospital. I had to devise means to live in my community and to access health services. I had to depend on writing down my medical problems and showing them to the nurse. However, the government of Uganda continues to make laws and ratify international conventions that promote rights for PWDs – although most of those laws remain largely on paper and have not been implemented.

Gitte: But why is it so important to implement or ratify the rights? For example, rights for PWDs – if you say the government cannot even afford it, who is responsible for the implementation?

Ronald: In my thinking, I don't know why the government ratifies so many treaties, but it doesn't work. Maybe the issue is about public relations (PR). Maybe for reasons of PR, they want to be seen doing good at the international level and be praised. Actually, Uganda is one of the few countries that is widely believed to have the best national constitution for people with

disabilities in the world. Another problem comes at the time of planning and prioritization, which seem to be going wrong most of the time. I wonder why they make things work fail to work. Is it because they lack skills? Are they inexperienced? There is also a distant relationship between those ratifying the laws and those planning their implementation. They do not have strong coordination between those two groups.

Now you have the National Planning Authority. How do they know that Uganda has ratified a new convention? So when they are making national plans, they take into consideration such ratified conventions. Even those who manage to get copies of such conventions find them abstract and confusing. There is not a good working relationship between those who adopt such conventions and those who are planning the implementations.

Gitte: Do you think that the ratification of rights for PWDs indirectly helps to get external funding, for example for UNAD?

Ronald: Yes, take an example in Uganda. Uganda was reviewed by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) this year. The committee made some recommendations, which are called concluding observations. In practice, these observations are like recommendations to the government about what they should do on various articles. They usually highlight where the government has been successful and where it has failed, and then provide recommendations. Most of these recommendations are drawn from their interactions with DPOs

in the country under review. This is a very good document – I don't know if I shared it with you?

Gitte: Yes.

Ronald: It's very good when you read through it. The government has to report back after four years, so in 2021. The UN is expecting the Ugandan government to report on how far they have implemented those recommendations. This can help us as NGOs in advocacy work. For instance, we could meet a minister or any official to say, "Please, these are recommendations and observations by the UN committee that require implementation. How are you implementing them?"

The UN member family, like UNICEF, UNFPA, UN DESA, and other international and strong national organizations, are very interested in those concluding observations. So when you deal with those groups, you can say this is what happened: the UN recommended them. Some funding agencies are starting to base their funding on CRPD implementation. For example, the Disability Rights Fund requires applicants to show which articles in the CRPD will be addressed and how, so this is an opportunity out of that.

Gitte: I mean, it is not only you [UNAD] or NUDIPU; there are so many focusing on rights…

Ronald: All DPOs are focusing on rights-based approaches. We have over 10 DPOs, but of course they are under the national umbrella, NUDIPU.

Gitte: Why are you only focusing on rights?

Ronald: Every talk is about rights. Everything is about rights. Everything is connected to rights. When we talk about economic empowerment, the language changes, and now we talk about a right. A person has the right to food, a person has the right to education, a person has the right to health; other issues can be achieved through economic empowerment. The government might fail to provide all we want, but we need to continue. There are some achievements by the government, for example the special grants for PWDs. The grant is economically empowering PWDs in all districts despite some challenges facing the grant, such as corruption.

Gitte: When I read about citizenship for deaf people, it is about becoming equal, having the same opportunities like normal people. It is a lot about claiming rights. But what you are saying [is] a good citizen is not someone who is claiming; it is someone who takes responsibilities.

Ronald: Yes, that is true. That's the question I wanted to ask you: You claim the rights from whom?

Gitte: The government?

Ronald: Who is the government? Many people have a picture in mind when thinking of the government: they take it like a building. But when you go in that "government building," who do you meet? You are going to meet your uncle or your mother or your brother working there. Why not then claim the right from your home? Because the person who is at home could be the same person working in those government offices. Any person can be government. It is wrong to see the government as a building. It is a wrong assumption.[1]

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

[1] Interview with Ronald, Kampala, August 4, 2016.

6 Creating Competence for Citizenship for Whom? The Dilemma of the Rights-Based Approach for People with Disabilities

Ronald is an active member of UNAD, the national umbrella DPO of and for deaf people in Uganda. He is a disability activist and a member of the leading party NRM. As a researcher, Ronald is a critical observer of disability- and deaf-related approaches, especially in Uganda; as member of UNAD, he follows a rights-based approach in his work. In this short excerpt above, taken from a long interview with him, he relativizes the expectations of the Ugandan state as a guarantor of rights for its citizens. Claiming rights from the state is imagined more as a future guarantor of rights. For Ronald, rights are of utmost importance in discussions of national and international (disability- and deaf-related) polities, and rights are difficult to claim from the state in Uganda.

However, the state is still regarded as one of the most important actors in ensuring citizenship. Which role does the state take, and which role is attributed to the state? These questions have become even more relevant since disability has become a developing issue. The paradigm shift in understandings of disability – from a primarily medical understanding to a biosocial one – resulted in a situation in which medical programs took a back seat in political discussions of disability (although they still exist in these discussions to an extent), while equal rights and participation came to the fore (Grech 2016:8). As a result, these discussions centered less on the prevention of impairment and the treatment of bodily

conditions than on the removal of socio-cultural barriers leading to economic disadvantages.

Since the late 1990s, the rights-based approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities in countries of the Global South has been increasingly related to development (Grech 2016:3). In the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), a direct link was made between disability and development, "[e]mphasizing the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of sustainable development" (Preamble). Through this convention, "the question of discrimination is made into a question of development" (Ingstad 1997:17). With a strong lobby – especially from organizations specifically related to health and disability, of which many are located in the Global North – a disability component was included in the UN's post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Grech 2016:4). The "bidirectional link to poverty" (WHO/World Bank 2011:265) was highlighted in the connection between disability and development, which regarded poverty as a reason *for* disability as well as a result *of* disability.

It is assumed that people with disabilities face additional barriers in areas such as employment, livelihood, education, health, and rehabilitation (Grech 2016:6). According to the World Report of Disability published by the WHO and World Bank in 2011, the number of people experiencing disability is estimated at more than one billion worldwide, most of whom live in countries of the Global South. These figures – together with the assumption that disability is bidirectionally linked to poverty – were the most important arguments in pushing disability into

discussions of development. Increasingly, critical voices have pointed out a lack of in-depth research in the relationship between poverty and disability (Grech 2016; Eide and Ingstad 2011). However, these as-yet-unexplored gaps between poverty and disability have only slowly led to more research, showing the complexities as well as (dis)connections of this relationship. It seems that disability activists and organizations continue to push for disability issues even harder in the rights-based approach to development. One reason for this may be that the number of donors willing to support DPO activities is still limited, leading to a strong dependency on only a few donors (Blackler 2008:319).

In countries of the Global South, the ratification of rights for deaf people refers to the establishment and extension of services for people with disabilities in the form of education (including vocational training), access to healthcare facilities, and sign language translation. Other aspects of rights for people with disabilities point to heightened awareness of the accessibility of sites being constructed – e.g., buildings or roads – and their interplay with (assistive) technologies. Thus, rights point first of all to situations of insufficient services, institutions, and infrastructure; at the same time, they demand the removal of barriers of participation for people with disabilities. When gaps are seen in their implementation, the state is mainly called into account. In this logic, competences for citizenship are generated through rights, which in turn should lead to an implementation of infrastructure and institutions.

Against this background, Uganda is regarded as a success story – not so much because the state introduced many services accessible to the majority of

people with disabilities and thus enhanced many lives, but because Uganda ratified a great deal of rights regarding people with disabilities and introduced disability-friendly politics. For a long time, this point alone was proof enough of the progress of the recent approach.

After more than 20 years of disability politics in Uganda, the sought-after transitions for, and improvements in, the lives of people with disabilities on the grassroots level are increasingly being called into question. This points to a failure of the Ugandan state to establish the necessary steps for implementation as well as a failure of DPOs in Uganda, with urban leaders increasingly seen as disconnected from local situations and problems (Blackler 2008:316).

In this chapter, I argue that this situation is intrinsic to the implementation of rights-based approaches that focus mainly on the education of PWDs and the creation of leadership roles for them with the aim of promoting rights and pushing these rights into national legislation. As many of the services have not yet been established, responsibilities ping-pong between the state and international organizations, and even newly established services are hardly accessible for the majority of people with disabilities (these services are limited in number and often entail unaffordable costs for transport, school fees, materials, etc.). Amidst enthusiasm for the rights-based approach of people with disabilities, the experiences and livelihoods of people with disabilities are (once again) disregarded in the local contexts of their families, communities, and villages – those who, according to the argument of this approach, are the target of such rights.

Competences for citizenship keep changing not only within everyday life, but also within national politics and international discussions; they are always linked to context-specific practices and discourses. In the previous chapter, I showed how competences for citizenship changed according to one's lifecycle and as part of social, political, and spatial transitions. In this chapter, I will analyze the competences created in national and international deaf- and disability-related polities, as well as the limits of these competences. I will show that the rights-based approach, and the focus on educating disability activists with the main function of implementing rights in national constitutions, trigger practices that are widely uncoupled from opportunities to gain competences for citizenship in daily life.

6.1 Needs-based competence for citizenship

In the previous chapters, I have highlighted the importance of social networks for deaf people in Acholiland to gain competence for citizenship, as well as the importance of accessing resources to establish social relationships. Within this background, legal rights and policies might provide an expression of hope for society in the future. For the daily lives of deaf people, however, rights and policies mean little:

> "By constitution, we all have the same rights, but in practice, there is a problem. Some are oppressed, and deaf people don't have the same level [of rights] as hearing people have. If you compare the opportunities to work, you will see a difference. The law stops on paper. If the law goes to work, it is different. If you have good social relationships, people are free to share

> your challenges, your things, even if you are poor and you have not been to school. But when you have social relationships, you become the same. But there are challenges – if you are poor, people might steer clear of you, or if you have HIV, people might not become social with you."[1]

Sociality – to be social and part of social networks – is seen as the most important issue in order to "become the same," i.e., to get the same opportunities and possibilities in life as hearing people. In this context, poverty and disability shape the socialities of deaf people and thus shape the competences of citizenship.

This aspect has been brought to the fore in the work of Herbert Muyinda (2008). In his study of people with mobility disabilities in northern Uganda, Muyinda showed how social relationships shape the meaning and experience of disability, deeming this interplay "embodied sociality." According to Muyinda's approach, embodied sociality has three components: first, a bodily (mal)formation that elicits social attention; second, an environment (family, institutions, etc.) that develops social responses to this formation; and third, the bodily expression of attention or social response (Muyinda 2008:20).

Regarding deaf people, communication practices – not a (mal)formation – are what evoke social attention. These communication practices not only involve sign language, but also include gestures, spoken languages, and practices of lip-reading and can shape feelings of both closeness and difference.

[1] Interview with Simon, Gulu, December 2015.

I have shown that shared and distributed competences for citizenship are based, generated, and shaped in different kinds of polities. The creation of deaf- and disability-related polities through programs centered on sign language expanded competences for citizenship through sign-language-related social networks for both hearing and deaf people. In the case of deaf people in Acholiland, there is an evident extension of competences in shared sign-language-related networks, as well as a transition of kin or working networks through the establishment of meaningful social relationships in which the spread of UgSL can be seen as a instigator as well as a result.

Despite the importance of both governmental and non-governmental programs and services that created spaces in which sign-language-related networks were established, the responsibility of gaining competences for citizenship is in practice given to – and seen as held by – deaf people themselves. A good citizen, as Ronald and many of my other interlocutors emphasized, is a person who takes on his or her own responsibilities. This aspect has been highlighted in the work of Oosterom (2011) as well. According to Oosterom's research, being a good citizen in Acholiland meant that men took on responsibilities to protect and provide, while for women, childcare and contributing to community relations were foremost (Oosterom 2011:400). Citizenship is primarily understood as the relational networks of kin and village. These aspects are also mentioned in the Ugandan constitution of 1995, which stated that the duty of every citizen should be "(c) 'to contribute to the well-being of the community where that citizen lives' [and] (d) 'to promote responsible parenthood'" (Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995:XXIX).

Thus, citizenship in Uganda, even within the Ugandan constitution, is based on more than the relationships between the state and the individual citizen.

Competences for citizenship are experienced and practiced in relation to their context and are situation-specific. In the context of deaf people in Acholiland, competences for citizenship are associated with the ability to fulfill responsibilities in one's family, village, or friendships. In the absence of a state as service provider, claiming legal rights from governmental institutions in practice is not only regarded as useless, but might even become detrimental. This was the case for Patrick in the conflict with his neighbor about the anthill. For him, legal justice was not the most important aspect; he merely sought for them to solve the problem together in a way that meant Patrick could still live in his village and maintain good relationships there. A court case would not only be very expensive and have an unpredictable outcome; it would also bring new aspects of conflict into Patrick's important social relationships.

I have also shown that social networks were of importance for deaf people in Acholiland to access government (and government-initiated) programs and projects. In cases where services were implemented, such as education for deaf children, families struggled to pay school fees and transport costs for their children. Once again, social networks became important for families not only to receive some money, but also to get information about programs and projects that might help secure future access to funds and services. Moreover, group-building was a requirement for some grants.

At the center of deaf people's everyday lives in Acholiland were concrete *needs* in which financial means were necessary to pay for services like education and healthcare, as well as to become social and be part of social networks. Financial means were necessary to fill social needs, too. Many of these needs were not specific to deaf people. However, some services – like boarding schools or transport costs to school from isolated areas – required more funds. For my interlocutors in Acholiland, the rights-based approach brought sign language, but along with it came opportunities for (and interest in) creating a new sign-language-related polity for both deaf and hearing people, that increased their competences for citizenship and thus helped them to satisfy their needs.

6.2 National politics and/or the disability movement

The focus on rights in Uganda was accompanied and even encouraged by the new political direction of the NRM. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the disability movement in Uganda regards itself as an important driver advocating for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the new constitutional framework in Uganda.

On the international stage, the disability movement – especially the DPOs in Uganda – were regarded and represented as civil society organizations, and formally they were registered as non-governmental organizations. A clear distinction between governmental and non-governmental organizations cannot be made. Instead, the closeness between these two can be seen as one way of explaining the support for – and success of – the ratification of rights for people with disabilities in Uganda's legislation.

In Uganda, according to Ndeezi (2004:22), the disability movement consists of an alliance of members of parliament (MPs), NUDIPU board directors, local government councilors for people with disabilities, NUDIPU members, disability organizations, NGOs for people with disabilities, interested individuals, and funding agencies (Ndeezi 2004:22). It is noteworthy that disability activists, governmental organizations, and national and international non-governmental organizations are all regarded as part of this movement.

This presentation goes along with the representation and promotion of people with disabilities as one group marginalized by wider society. In this promotion, the creation of a narrative of shared experiences – as well as shared perspectives for the future – can be seen as a shared practice to obtain competence for citizenship within the deaf- and disability-related polity. In the case of deaf people, the focus on sign language and the integration of the concept of Deaf culture in the rights of people with disabilities can both be seen as an expression of this perspective to obtain competence for citizenship. However, according to my research, it is questionable that an understanding of Deaf culture exists for deaf people in Uganda; similarly, it is doubtful that all people with disabilities have the same experiences of oppression or exclusion.

Nevertheless, all people with disabilities in Uganda are regarded as members of NUDIPU, which makes the disability movement the biggest civil society movement in Uganda (talk with the director of NUDIPU, 2016). According to Ndeezi, all people with disabilities in Uganda are linked to each other through a shared concern, vision, and perception regarding disability issues (Nzeezi 2004:22).

In Uganda, the disability movement, particularly that of DPOs, is strongly interwoven with national politics, questioning the promoted picture of a unified social movement in different ways. In Ndeezi's account of the history of the disability movement, the foundation of NUDIPU is referred to as its spearhead; according to Ndeezi (2004:30), the board of NUDIPU had to be opportunistic. In concrete terms: NUDIPU had to become part of the leading political direction of the NRM.

When the NRM took over, a movement system was instated of which all Ugandans were deemed to be members. In this context, people with disabilities were members of the NRM, and thus all members of DPOs also held membership in both the NRM and DPOs. Of course, this did not mean that all people in Uganda supported the NRM and their politics. However, the DPOs – including NUDIPU as well as UNAD – took over this kind of "membership." In the promotion of the disability movement, they used the national framework, which enabled them to represent *all* people with disabilities:

> "This policy was clearly manifested in the manner in which the NRM attached great importance to the status of women in general and in particular to its struggle[. F]or example, NRM was the first organized military force in Uganda to have women combatants participating in the liberation war. The idea of empowerment through various affirmative actions was also extended to the youth and later to persons with disabilities" (Ndeezi 2004:17).

This inclusion – or better, this way to become part of the national movement – was important in reaching many people with disabilities, thus extending its

network and decentralizing offices, advocacy, and subsequently programs. At the same time, the DPOs extended the reach of the NRM.

Resulting from this politics, political participation – especially representation of people with disabilities – was increasingly regarded as NRM-driven. This situation did not change after the referendum to hold a multi-party system in 2005. In addition, NUDIPU was responsible for organizing the elections of representatives of people with disabilities at all levels. Uganda is divided into administrative units, consisting of village (LC I), parish (LC II), sub-counties (LC III), counties (LC IV), and districts (LC V), and four administrative regions (Northern, Eastern, Central and Western). Within each of them, representatives of people with disabilities are elected. On the national level, five seats are reserved for people with disabilities (one seat for each of the four administrative regions, and one for women with disabilities).

At the levels from LC I to LC V, one man and one woman with disabilities are elected to be included in political administrative decisions. While many still cite Lwanga-Ntale, mentioning that 46,218 people with disabilities were included in politics in the different local councils in 1998, the creation of new villages, parishes, sub-counties, and districts led to an increase in the number of these representatives. According to the General Elections Report for 2016, the number of members of councils and committees was 334,528 (The Republic of Uganda). Still today, little is known about what – and how – these representatives can contribute.

The dominance of the NRM did not shift when Uganda introduced a multi-party system. Indeed, it confirms the lasting dominance of NRM members in

higher-ranked positions over a long period of time. Just from this brief glimpse at the names of MPs as well as their political party membership, it appears that most of them were part of the NRM and that many representatives held their positions for a long time:

	1996 (all belonged to NRM)	**2001**	**2006 (multi-party)**	**2011**	**2016**
West	Eliphaz Mazima	Eliphaz Mazima; replaced after death by Katuramu Kiribedda Hood	Katuramu Kiribedda Hood (NRM)	Katuramu Kiribedda Hood (NRM)	Katuramu Kiribedda Hood (independent)
East	Mwandha James	Mwandha James[2]	Asamo Hellen Grace (NRM)	Asamo Hellen Grace (NRM)	Asamo Hellen Grace (NRM)
North	Babadiri	Babadiri[3]	Nokrach William Wilson (NRM)	Nokrach William Wilson (NRM)	Nokrach William Wilson (independent)
Central	Ndeezi Alex	Ndeezi Alex	Ndeezi Alex (NRM)	Ndeezi Alex (NRM)	Ndeezi Alex (NRM)
Female	Nayiga Ssekabira Florence	Nayiga Ssekabira Florence	Nalule Safia Jjuuko (NRM)	Nalule Safia Jjuuko (NRM)	Nalule Safia Jjuuko (NRM)

Table I: Members of Parliament representing persons with disabilities in Uganda (1996–2016)

[2] Mwandha James joined parliament before the creation of special interest groups, i.e., he was a member of the National Resistance Council (NRC) of 5th Parliament, which drafted the 1995 constitution creating representation of special interest groups. For the NRC, he represented an ordinary constituency, but after creating posts for PWDs, he decided to stand to represent East. He lost in 2006, however, when he joined the opposition party The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC).

[3] Babadiri and Nayiga Florence both decided to run for election in mainstream politics and both won: Babadiri as Women MP for Koboko District (unopposed in the 2016 election), and Nayiga Florence as Women MP for Kayunga District, although she lost the election in 2016. Additionally, however, she served as the first state minister for disability and the elderly.

Disability issues are deeply linked to – and interwoven with – national politics in Uganda. In Uganda, talking about disability politics also means talking about national politics. Often represented as a shared concern of people with disabilities, discussions about national entanglement with the disability movement were widely disregarded in Uganda's disability success story.

6.3 The competences of people with disabilities as political representatives

As Ronald mentioned above, rights are an important tool or prerequisite for receiving external funding. However, discussions within the disability movement focused less on questions of how such rights may lead to deaf people's competences for citizenship in a concrete, necessary way, and more on questions of how rights can be incorporated into legislation.

In the national context, competences for citizenship shifted from a needs-based approach, with a focus on the lives of people with disabilities, to a rights-based approach, which focused on the creation and establishment of collaborations, DPOs, and the education of activists in countries of the Global South. Hence, the focus shifted from people with disabilities as beneficiaries to representatives of people with disabilities – often, intelligent men who were willing, motivated, and ambitious enough for an education based on ideals and in cooperation with countries of the Global North. In this context, competence for citizenship was seen in the ability to push rights for people with disabilities in the national constitutions, as well as the ability to direct the government to ratify treaties. In education

programs for leadership initiated by countries of the Global North, important aspects included the language of rights, approaches of advocacy, and the idea of unifying people as people with disabilities.

This approach can also be applied to UNAD's main aim: to "advocate for the promotion and protection of rights of Deaf persons with a vision of dignified lives of all Deaf persons in Uganda" (UNAD website, July 26, 2017). UNAD does not advocate for concrete *resources* needed, but for rights.

In 2005, questions were raised as to how far NUDIPU had made a difference for people with disabilities in comparison to what they had promised (Blackler 2008:325). There was doubt as to whether NUDIPU had managed to make sufficient change at the grassroots level so as to increase the lives of the majority of people with disabilities. The Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People (DSI) withdrew a significant amount of its funding from NUDIPU because they could not see any impact (Blackler 2008:325).

DPOs, as I have mentioned before, were highly dependent on external funding (Blackler 2008:320ff). For a long time, this dependency has not been taken into focus; instead, external funding was promoted as making a positive change for people with disabilities, especially in countries like Uganda in which the government has only limited resources to fund the work of the disability movement (Blackler 2008:324). At the same time, donors like the DSI saw this dependency in a much more critical light. They mentioned that organizations from the Global North were regarded less as partners and more as donors; additionally, they believed that the

donors set the conditions of funding without leaving room for their partner DPOs in Uganda (Blacker 2008:321).

The implementation of rights was supported by the entanglement of the disability movement with prevailing governmental directions, on the one hand, and the flexibility – or ability – to promote the disability movement as part of an "independent" political disability movement, on the other. These relationships have been mainly disregarded in the dominant narrative regarding the history of the emancipation of people with disabilities in Uganda. Instead, the success was seen foremost in terms of the international cooperation, support, and external funding that resulted in a strong collaboration between the Global North and the Global South.

6.4 Promoting shared experiences and deaf citizenship

Although deaf people are regarded as part of the disability movement, they differ in their concrete claims. Disability in the context of deaf people are mainly discussed in relation to Deaf culture and Ugandan Sign Language. According to Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck (2015:29), rights for people with disabilities were seen as an instrument that provided new opportunities to support deaf people, especially in the promotion of sign language rights, and the development of national policy and legislation. Moreover, the UN conventions, advocacy work, and scholarships have been regarded as "pathways to deaf citizenship" (Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck 2015:30).

The long-term North–South development cooperation between Uganda and Denmark from 1992 to 2006 encompassed capacity-building in advocacy and research (Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck 2015:30). Although there was discussion of needs in areas of deaf citizenship such as education and teacher training, access to interpretation, and other services (Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck 2015:33), the main focus of this cooperation was on rights; like NUDIPU, this cooperation also started with leadership training from 1993 to 1994.

Four Ugandans, including Ndeezi Alex, were selected for a 7-month training program in Denmark. The four deaf community leaders also worked with the community to organize 11 regional associations as branches of UNAD. UNAD received funding for over 14 years from the Danish government for capacity-building, development of training programs for UgSL teaching and interpretation, and lexicographic research for the publication of an UgSL dictionary (Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck 2015:41). As Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck describe, this success story is actually the story of the standardization of sign language, implementation of rights, and the education of political representatives. And it is a story about only a few people taking part.

The new political positions created a new elite of deaf activists representing deaf people in Uganda. The Deaf People and Human Rights Report (2009) is often cited as a resource showing the situation of deaf people in 93 countries, despite the caveat that "the people answering the questions and the members of the regional working groups belong to a small elite group of Deaf people" (Haualand and Allen 2009:11). Elites play an important role in maintaining a picture of people with

disabilities; they also might be interested in doing so since the presentation of poor(er) deaf people explains their own personal and organizational success. Gaining competence for citizenship means becoming able to make claims in terms of rights in deaf- and disability-related polities, which in turn presupposes influence and participation in national politics.

6.5 Disregarded competences for citizenship

Many of the gaps between rights and their implementation can be seen as part of the rights-based approach itself. The approach supports leadership, advocacy, and promotion for deaf people; sign language was especially brought into focus. Regarded as the best way to empower people with disabilities, the approach highlights demands for delivery of the rights and services to which persons with disabilities are entitled (Abbay 2012). With that, human rights are regarded as the major instrument to enforce full citizenship and improve the standards of living (Abbay 2012). Competences for citizenship mainly focus on the education of a few people with disabilities; the focus on the ratification of rights in national constitutions led to a gap in the work and perspective of disability activism between the aforementioned new elites and people with disabilities at the grassroots level.

Moreover, DPOs took many slogans and concepts from activists of the Global North. One example is the concept of Deaf culture: I only came across this term when, talking with Joyce (from the Prologue) about the training sessions she

went to in Kampala, she mentioned that "they taught us sign language, Deaf culture and rights."[4] Ronald, who had started to research deaf people's access to and use of information technologies, stated in a personal talk with me that he struggled with the concept of Deaf culture, since to him, deaf people in everyday life didn't refer to such a common understanding and identity as a "deaf person." When my interlocutors referred to the term "culture," they were speaking about Acholi culture, not deaf- or sign-language-related polities.

Regarding to the shift in development politics, the fact that the Ugandan state is still considered the main actor to guarantee rights seems paradoxical: Before the 1970s, states were the main beneficiaries of aid, but development aid became increasingly decentralized (Bierschenk et al. 2002:7), leading to a situation in which states no longer had control of huge amounts of aid in the flow of North to South.

Furthermore, the politics of recognition brought a new idea of rights, based on group identities, to the fore. Both the decentralization of aid and the constellation of new rights-based approaches became important technologies for the creation of "development broker" positions, understood as mediators between beneficiaries and donors. And while funding was increasingly given to civil society organizations, the state has still been viewed as the major actor in guaranteeing rights.

In this constellation, organizations – like NUDIPU or UNAD on the national level, and the Deaf Union Gulu on the local level – can be seen as brokers,

[4] Interview with Joyce, Gulu District, April 28, 2015.

simultaneously representing people in need and advocating for rights. What is misleading in this situation is that the deaf- and disability-related polities these organizations (re)create is neither directly linked to nor influenced by deaf people's daily lives and challenges. Decisions about the directions of programs and projects barely included social, economic, and cultural contexts, nor did they take into consideration knowledge about how deaf people are able to (re)create competences for citizenship beyond the deaf- and disability-related polity. This led to a situation in which different competences for citizenship in the deaf- and disability-related polities are (re)created by only a few people. The important transitions that take place through the creation of a sign-language-related polity and the competences for citizenship within it were disregarded in the deaf-and disability-related polity. Thus, different kinds of competences for citizenship are generated, leading to a disconnection of needs from rights.

From this perspective, the extent to which the implementation of rights for people with disabilities can contribute to the lives of deaf people and people with disabilities in countries of the Global South is strongly entangled with the question of how people gain competences for citizenship in their day-to-day lives. I have shown that the introduction of deaf- and disability-related polities in Uganda transformed the lives of deaf people in Acholiland in important aspects – although not in the intended linear logic. A greater focus on how people (re)create competences for citizenship – their opportunities to make meaningful claims within different polities – bring important aspects of deaf people's lives to the fore.

Legal rights can become a means to access resources, but rights do not guarantee citizenship. Instead, the rights-based approach, as it appears today, relocates responsibilities from the state to citizens. In terms of services for people with disabilities, competences for citizenship are distributed according to contributions from governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations.

Due to the strong dependence on disability activists from donors of the Global North, which propel these activists in specific directions, other perspectives in the manifold livelihoods and experiences of people with disabilities have been disregarded. Moreover, in the discussion of deaf citizenship and rights-based approaches for deaf people, other polities that deaf people create and are part of have been widely disregarded, yet these are also important in gaining competences for citizenship. Until deaf people and *their* DPOs find their own ways to connect deaf- and disability related polities to other polities important for deaf people to (re)create competence for citizenship, and until they are able to successfully push them forward into national and international discussions, the dominant concepts and ideals will remain dominant.

7 Final Conclusions

In this monograph, I have analyzed deaf people's perspectives, challenges, and opportunities to make meaningful claims in Acholiland from the 1970s until 2016, applying the analytical concepts of shared and distributed competence for citizenship. My initial point of entry was my field material, used both for the conception of the theoretical framework and the unfolded analysis. The arguments in this book reflect many of the questions and doubts that arose for me when I realized that my field material did not fit into the dominant discussions of studies on citizenship and deafness/disability: my interlocutors did not deem legal recognition, and thus a rights-based perspective, to be important in managing and enhancing their everyday lives and (re)creating possibilities to make meaningful claims. Polities of kin and community, as well as sign-language-related polities, played a much bigger role for them in creating competence for citizenship. Nevertheless, legal recognition *does* play a crucial role as well: it was important to push forward deaf- and disability-related institutions with the support of external funds. In doing so, new spaces were created in which sign-language-related socialities formed; through legal recognition, external funding also became more likely. At the same time, as this thesis has shown, the extension of rights created a new "deaf elite" in Uganda that is closely connected to both politics in Uganda (e.g., the rise of the NRM) and international discussions.

Competences for citizenship are crucial for the allocation of resources, struggles for power, and access to services. Citizenship, as Nyers (2007) contends, is multifaceted and contested not only in scientific works, but also for citizens

themselves. Competences for citizenship are desired, acquired, expected, and fought for as well as denied and discarded. They are shaped through one's lifecycle (from childhood to adulthood to old age) and gender aspects, through socio-political and spatial transitions (encampment and resettlement, or urban and rural settings), and through different polities from a historical perspective.

Ethnographically, this book shows unique insights into deaf people's lives and thus contributes to the anthropological work of deaf studies in countries of the Global South. The innovative concepts used in this analysis are reinforced by citizenship discussions, and I have sought to contribute to the slowly growing amount of studies of deaf people and citizenship in developing a novel analytical framework.

I opened this thesis with questions about how deaf people could make meaningful claims for citizenship and which polities were of importance in this regard. Citizenship for deaf people, according to Lord and Stein, "hinges on the ability to effectively engage in community life, whether at school, at work, or during cultural activities, and the means to claim rights, whether in accessing justice, healthcare services, public information, and the like" (2015:204). My analysis shifts the perspective, focusing less on where and how deaf people were excluded and unable to make claims. Indeed, it turned out that deaf people in Acholiland *could* make diverse meaningful claims in different social and institutional networks, but that their opportunities to do so were strongly shaped by the qualities of their relationships to such polities.

As the case of James showed, children (re)create competences for citizenship foremost through the quality of their kin relationships, in which not all social agents

involved offer the same possibility for children to make claims. James was able to make a claim for attending school due to the support of his uncle – in the beginning, however, this claim even opposed the will of James' mother. The quality of kin relationships could also be stressed with regard to accessing land in the resettlement process, as shown by the case of Denis. When he was planning to return to his land, his relatives and neighbors pointed to his absence over the past few years during the time of war; his uncle asked him, "Where have you been?" The conflict was solved after both families started to build stronger social relationships in order to help and care for one another. Moreover, Patrick's experience showed the importance of social relationships within the community. In the conflict in which he was involved, it was much more important to look for a solution within the community than seek action in a legal court.

Becoming – or being recognized as – a member of a polity means creating relationships and thus extending the polity's social relational field. At the same time, membership does not automatically mean having the opportunity to claim rights. This was made apparent in the case of the deaf-and disability-related polity. Vocational programs did not lead to competences for citizenship in terms of acquisition of knowledge and thus economic improvement, nor did institution-related polities offer possibilities to make meaningful claims within them. Deaf people could not make many choices when it came to workshops and vocational training, nor did they have a voice in the selection and implementation of such training. Deaf people in Acholiland can be better described as clients than citizens in this polity, and few deaf people actually gained competences for citizenship within it. For Ronald, for example, the polity offered individual success, opportunities for

education, and economic improvement. It is less a question of "membership" of a polity and more a question about the *qualities* of social and institutional relationships with(in) the polity.

Recognition is of major importance in (re)creating opportunities to make meaningful claims in different polities. Honneth's approach of love, rights, and solidarity as kinds of recognition and spheres of interaction, as well as forms of integration into society and opportunities to make meaningful claims, helped me to analyze how competences for citizenship were created. Within the diverse polities, different kinds of recognition were both experienced and expected. This book makes inroads into studies of citizenship and deafness that point to the importance of looking deeper into polities of kin, community, and institutions. From the perspective of my interlocutors, different kinds of recognition shape claim-making opportunities in important ways, which is what I have strived to show in this thesis. In kin relationships, affection, attention, sharing, and – most importantly – communication were mentioned as expressions of love-based recognition. Making claims within one's family was regarded as part of a reciprocal exchange; claims were regarded less as a right and instead were based on negotiations. As the cases of Denis and Patrick showed, the right to access land was strongly connected to one's continued social relationships and assuming responsibilities to care for the family as well as the community. In the sign-language-related polity, socio-emotional support created a strong sense of recognition. Moreover, deaf people regarded sharing information and exchanging news as their responsibility to other deaf people and an expression of solidarity. Claims made against the state within the disability movement aim to achieve legal rights. Such claims are based on the assumption that

deaf people, as part of the wider category of people with disabilities, are an oppressed and marginalized group. As I have shown, however, it depends on the specific polity as to how, and in what way, deafness is regarded and perceived as a disability.

Context defines what deafness and disability means. Although this is one of the most important issues that arose with the turn in disability studies and the conceptualization of the social model, in most cases deafness as a disability is regarded more as an attribute, a bodily condition of a person, than a "fluid status" connected to environmental context. I have shown in this thesis that perceptions and feelings of being deaf or disabled, of being oppressed, marginalized, and excluded, went alongside many other experiences of being loved, liked, and respected. In discussions within deaf studies, oppression is seen as the most important shared experience of deaf people (Kusters and Friedner 2015:Pos. 131). My interlocutors experienced different forms of oppression in very diverse contexts, situations, and polities. Feelings of both oppression and recognition were situation-specific. I tried to underscore oppression and recognition in context: in childhood memories, in communication, and in (un)equal relationships. Instead of examining aspects of oppression, like human-rights-oriented scholars often intend to do in order to highlight grievances, scholars need to bring context and situation into the discussion. Both oppression and recognition were not experienced in a vacuum, but always *in relation* to other circumstances.

The shift in deaf- and disability-related studies from a medical perspective to a social and/or cultural contextualization increasingly connected deafness and disability with approaches to remove barriers within society and create new paths to

increase and enhance participation. The arguments were based on the rights of people with disabilities and connected to an institution-based polity. Previous approaches by medical and charity organizations were strongly criticized. This led to a situation in which the everyday *needs* of deaf people in countries of the Global South increasingly took a back seat in discussions about enhancing their lives.

The polity of kin centralizes needs, not rights. How a need is defined, and in which ways, does not fit into the idea of need in development-based definitions; furthermore, not all deaf people have the same needs. Needs in Acholiland involved bride prices, not just the day-to-day needs of calories, housing, sign language dictionaries, or an interpretation of TV news (since most neither have a TV nor the electricity needed for one). Cash was almost always needed: to pay for school fees, medical treatment, and transport costs; as to help out others; and – of major importance – to (re)create social relationships and thus be able to make claims within different polities. As such, I would like to bring back discussions of the "needs-based" approaches that have been neglected since the emancipation of deaf people in the Global North. It might be useful to look into the concept of need in a more closer and contextualized understanding. What kind of other functions and roles could deaf-focused organizations play – not as a broker in the chain of development aid, but as an active actor and new social agent in deaf people's social networks? Such an analysis also needs to address the manifold situations in which deaf people are involved.

Moreover, another assumption of the rights-based approach is that deaf people regard and experience themselves as *deaf* people and that if they meet, they will establish their own language and community "by nature." This assumption,

underlying the ideal of Deaf culture, is a naturalization of deaf people's development. The construction of deaf people's life courses has led to the development of programs and projects focusing on changing these presupposed situations. The strong emphasis on "sameness," conceptualized in approaches like "Deaf culture," "Deaf Identity," or "Deafhood," must be seen in terms of the socio-cultural and political contexts out of which scholars and activists acted. Many of these studies promote an idea of a "uniform and homogenous Deaf identity" (see, for example, the work of Lane, Hoffman and Bahan 1996; Ladd 2003; Padden and Humphries 2006; Breivik 2005). Moreover, much of their work is situated in countries of the Global North, ignoring lived worlds of the Global South.

This research has shown that such an approach does not always align with realities: despite the fact that deaf people knew about each other, they did not feel close to each other, as many of my interlocutors told me. The suggestion of paying much more attention to the context instead of applying presupposed concepts is not new (see, for example, Groce 1985; Kisch 2008, Friedner 2010; Fjord 2010), but this work gives consideration to the demand for more context-specific approaches and concepts.

The strength and dominance of organizations that strongly follow the cultural approach can be seen in the statements of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). The WFD is one of the members of the International Disability Alliance, which has a consultative function for UN organizations and other international organizations and measures the degree of autonomy of DPOs worldwide (according to their membership in the WFD, for example) (Haualand and Allen 2009:15). Despite the fact that the WFD doesn't provide an explanation

as to how far membership is an expression of autonomy, it promotes a picture of "sameness" in which all deaf people share sign language and Deaf culture in the same way. Autonomy in this way is not measured according to the possibility of freely deciding upon directions and approaches to defining deafness and supporting deaf people. From the perspective of DPOs in Uganda, in which autonomy and survival as an organization is strongly based on different social and political relationships, membership in the WFD extends these relationships in a very practical sense.

I believe that many DPOs became part of the WFD not so much because they agree with all of its ideals and approaches, but instead because it allows them to extend their access to much-needed resources. As my research has shown, the majority deaf people "learned" to be deaf as well as disabled due to the new institutions they joined. The introduction of these categories triggered an additional identity as a deaf person and a part of the sign-language-related polity. While, especially in countries of the Global North, discussions have arisen regarding the relation of deafness and disability, many deaf people don't regard themselves as disabled, but as members of a linguistic minority (Burch and Kafer 2010:xvii) – for my interlocutors, such a question only played a role in access to resources including education, training, or governmental programs.

This thesis has emphasized that socio-political and spatial transitions play a major role in shaping competences for citizenship. The socio-cultural history in Acholiland – the time of war and encampment, as well as resettlement – was crucial for the establishment of a new institution- and sign-language-related polity. I have shown that the expansion of deaf people's social relationships, as well as those of

their family members, colleagues, and friends supported the spread of sign language; likewise, sign language supported these social relationships. Moreover, I have shown that communication played a major role in the resettlement process, especially for those struggling with land access. Before encampment, deaf people stayed foremost in the relational fields of hearing families and communities – not only during childhood, but also as adults. I have shown that deaf-related institutions that reached northern Uganda as part of the decentralization process in the disability movement were an important catalyst in spreading Ugandan Sign Language and creating sign-language-related social networks. Moreover, I have shown how the context of war, particularly the difficult living conditions and scarce resources, made demands that the organizations intentionally or unintentionally used as strategies of motivation and advocacy. Food was provided at the first workshops and meetings, motivating people with disabilities to join.

Programs and projects were distributed very unevenly in Acholiland. The vast majority of organizations had their headquarters in Gulu. In central areas like Lacor and Gulu, deaf people created new opportunities for themselves. Information could be spread easily within these centers, and meetings organized by the organizations for people with disabilities were easier to reach. At the same time, this meant that many deaf people who stayed in IDP camps farther away from these centers became involved in these networks later – many of them during the post-war time.

The importance of sign language, as this thesis shows, can be regarded as creating competences for citizenship – although not in the expected way. According to the literature that focuses on the rights-based approach, sign language provides

access to education and thus enables deaf people to find jobs and enhance their lives. I have shown that sign language itself does not offer education, but instead sign language becomes a symbol and practice of educational institutions and development. In this context, such institutions and organizations created new spaces that were important for deaf people in creating deaf networks and sharing practices, including sign language. Within these social networks, shared competences for citizenship were created: recognition was experienced in the form of solidarity and through acts of sharing information and news, but also in the form of resources shared to support and help one another. Sign language played an important role in creating these kinds of shared practices. Sign language, as I have shown, extends and creates not only deaf-related networks, but also networks with hearing people, including family members, friends, and colleagues.

Thus, the success story of disability in Uganda with regard to Acholiland is less a success story of legal recognition and rights and the spread of concepts from North to South. Rather, the success lies in the fact that deaf people extended their competences for citizenship in creating a sign-language-related polity that was able to extend the social relationships of kin, friendships, or work. Sign language, as I have shown, is crucial and of the utmost importance to create competences for citizenship.

At one point, my interlocutor Simon asked me a crucial question: "But for deaf people, the continuation of sign language is of importance. If people stop learning this language, how will they communicate to other people?"[1] Like Simon, many of my interlocutors expressed fear that the new generation of deaf people will

[1] Interview with Simon, Gulu, December 2015.

not become exposed to sign language: growing up in dispersed villages, often without financial resources to attend boarding school, deaf children today hardly meet other deaf people and have the possibility to learn sign language. Some deaf adults try to support deaf children by visiting those who live nearby, but many of these children cannot be reached. Furthermore, financial funds to develop and (re)create sign-language-related networks seemed to be inaccessible – solely focusing on sign language might not align with the rights-based logic in which individual education – not sign language itself – leads to better economic changes, which in turn leads to an improvement of life.

Finally, as a researcher, I feel responsibility toward the people I have worked with for all these years. With this work, I hope not only to show, but also give evidence of the importance of extended research projects in focusing on, and analyzing the implementations of, alternative approaches – polities much more relevant and meaningful for many deaf people in Acholiland to create competence for citizenship. Much more in-depth research is needed in order to recognize the different contexts of which deaf people are part, and this research is greatly needed to rework and reformulate deaf-related aims and approaches on local, national, and international levels.

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